For a little while they watched, held by the enchantment of the scene. "It's the country of magic," said Saundry.

MAGIC

By

A.E.W. MASON

MR. COLIN SAUNDRY, C.M.G., started out as usual upon his circuit through the Barotse country at the end of the rainy season. He went with his usual pleasure at a few months' freedom from routine. But his pleasure was not shared by everyone in that forest-covered province. There were others besides malefactors who sighed with regret when they saw the first of his caravan and relief when they saw the last of it. Tall, lean, loose-limbed, with an odd, ugly monkey face and a voice which creaked like a rusty machine, he had a way of setting a lonely settlement rocketing with excitement. He was Commemoration Week, Eton and Harrow, Ascot, and a Court Ball all in one. To the wives he was romance and adventure and a whisper from old days. To the men he was an interference and a blatancy. He was too obviously The Great Big Noise, and too arrogantly explicit that nothing but his career must stand in the way of his pleasures.

On this occasion, however, he brought two guests along with him, a Major George Hardacre, and his wife, Carmel. He had found them two days out from his Headquarters sitting disconsolately at a fruit farm which had never begun to be anything but a failure.

"We hadn't enough capital or enough knowledge," Hardacre had said, pulling moodily at his moustache. He was a retired cavalry officer of thirty-six years, heavy, vacuous, and just as unfitted for the work of a pioneer as a man could well be.

"And we hadn't the resources in ourselves which might perhaps have made up for the want of the other things," Carmel added, gently enough; but there was a gleam in her eyes which Colin Saundry was quick to notice. Also, she was tall and slim and no more than twenty-eight years old, dark of hair and eyes, full-lipped, and rather beautiful. To Colin Saundry a challenge. So he made his suggestion.

"You both ought to get away from here at once. You can't see things in their proper proportion with the litter of a failure about you. If you come along with me, you'll have the leisure to make your plans, and I shall be very glad of your company."

They locked their door and came along. Colin Saundry was in no hurry. He was quite content to let the contrast between his easy efficiency and Hardacre's moody helplessness loom up into something very large and important. He went about the work of administering his district, and for a week saw little of his companions until the day was done. In the end a night came when Hardacre maundered with more than his usual monotony.

"I can't really forgive myself, you know. I didn't play fair with Carmel. You can see that for yourself, Saundry. I got her to put her little bit of money

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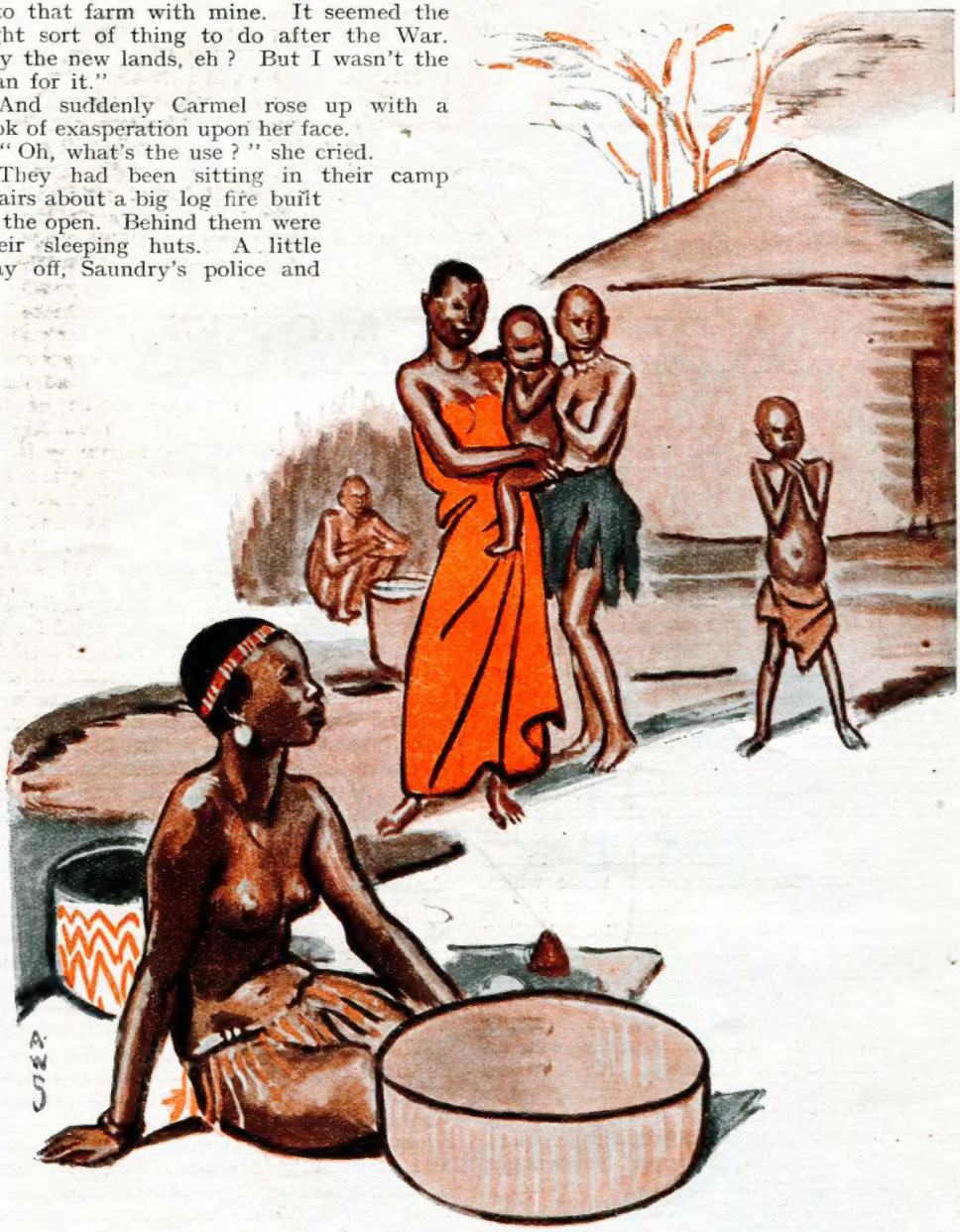
into that farm with mine. It seemed the right sort of thing to do after the War. Try the new lands, eh? But I wasn't the man for it."

And suddenly Carmel rose up with a look of exasperation upon her face.

"Oh, what's the use?" she cried.

They had been sitting in their camp chairs about a big log fire built in the open. Behind them were their sleeping huts. A little way off, Saundry's police and



his servants were chattering about a fire of their own. Carmel took a few steps away from the fire and spoke again with her back towards them.

"Don't let's talk of it! We'll only spoil this lovely night."

Saundry got up quickly and joined her.

"I'll show you something," he said; and he led her across the grass and between the bushes to the foot of a little hill. As they climbed it a thunderous muffled noise as of enormous engines revolving beneath the earth reached their ears and grew louder. On the top they halted, and Carmel drew in a deep breath, throwing her head back. Forest and open glade and scattered bush were spread out before them under a silver moon.

"It's magical," she said. "Listen!"

"During the three days I camp by your village, N'Gamba, eighty-five pounds of my Government's money are stolen," said Saundry. "I want that money back."

Far away in a stretch of forest a baboon mumbled and barked.

"It's the country of magic," Saundry returned. "Look!"

Far away tc the south-east above a hollow a white mist hung and swirled and changed its shape like a great canopy in a wind; and every now and then some corner of it flashed brightly as though the canopy disclosed an edge of glistening embroidery.

"The spray of the Falls," he said.

For a little while they watched, held by the enchantment of the scene. Then suddenly Carmel cried:—

"If he'd only turn on me just once and tell me I was no more use to him than a wet rag, I'd love it. I don't believe I'd

mind if he smacked my face. But he's on his knees—always. Oh ! "

And he was on her nerves, Colin Saundry could have added. The devout remorseful lover ! Could there be in the world a person more exasperating to a young and beautiful woman in the ruin of her fortunes ? What she wanted was courage, resolution, a definite plan to set things right. Instead she got a whine.

" How did it happen ? " Colin Saundry asked.

" Our marriage ? " said Carmel. She looked at her companion thoughtfully. She had no wish to belittle herself in his eyes by imitating her husband's whine. On the other hand she did not want him to think her an empty-headed fool who had been caught by the old glamour of a uniform. As they turned and walked back towards the camp she replied, choosing her words and watching her companion's face.

" You must go back to the War, no doubt, to understand it," she said. " I was eighteen. We were all easily carried away. The same sort of spirit brought us out here to Africa. A new Britain ! A new world ! "

She laughed half in scorn, half in regret, remembering those vanished enthusiasms, and then suddenly caught Saundry by the arm. They were half-way down the hill.

" Look ! "

" I have been looking for some while," Saundry answered in an odd voice.

" At George there by the fire ? "

" At George before he went to the fire."

Hardacre, his pipe in his mouth, was leaning forward in his camp chair fiddling with the lighted boughs of the camp fire, pushing one into the heart of the blaze, shifting another to one side, and all with such method that the little pyramid of flame and smoke might have been to him the most important thing in existence.

" Oh, can't you do something, Colin ? " she cried, passionately, and looked at him. Saundry was standing very still at her side with his eyes upon her ; and she was suddenly alarmed. She drew back, conscious of a shock. She repeated, rather to break the silence than to compel an answer :—

" Can't you do something ? "—and this time she omitted the Colin.

" Yes," he replied. " I can. This, as I told you, is the country of magic."

And now she was almost sorry that she had put the question. As they returned to the fire, Hardacre took his pipe from his mouth.

" I say—you two ! I've been thinking."

" You have ? Yes ? "

There was a lively eagerness in Carmel's voice. After all, then, he had been working out some plan whilst fiddling with the branches of the fire.

" I've been thinkin' that since we've got to get a move on pretty early in the mornin', it's about time we did a little shut-eye, what ? "

Carmel turned abruptly away, so that the look upon her face was hidden. Colin Saundry answered :—

" There's no hurry. We sha'n't, after all, be starting until the afternoon. A little thing has happened to-day. I meant to have told you about it at dinner. But I forgot."

He went at once across the clearing, and spoke to the head man of his police. It seemed that he, too, had not been warned of this change of plan. Carmel wondered, with a small stab of fear, whether Colin Saundry could have told them at dinner of the little thing which had happened ; and whether it hadn't happened within the last hour. She watched Saundry anxiously as he returned to the camp fire.

" To-morrow," he said to her, " I'll present to you the most remarkable woman, except yourself, north of the Zambesi River."

II.

THE three of them rode half a mile the next morning, and dismounted at the gate of a palisade which surrounded a native village of some thirty huts. In front of the most important of these huts, a plump young woman, black and sleek as a new silk hat, sat on a mat in her best beads and awaited her visitors with dignity.

Colin Saundry strode up to her and bowed twice.

" N'Gamba, great chief," he said in the only sort of English she could understand. " Dis judge," and he tapped himself upon the breast, " he catch complaint."

Away went N'Gamba's dignity. She clapped her hands delightedly, her round face creasing and crumpling like a baby's. She was N'Gamba, of course. She ruled thirty poverty-stricken Barotse families by the mere lift of her eyebrows. But here was the great magistrate with the voice like a rusty chain, pretending to appeal for her protection. Could anything be more entrancing ? She took him up in his own style. She shot one wicked little glance at the tall, slim white woman with the wedding-ring and replied sedately.

" N'Gamba make mammy palaver one time."

Before she could utter another word, Colin Saundry interrupted sharply.

" Hold your tongue, N'Gamba."

N'Gamba giggled, whilst Saundry mopped his face with his handkerchief.

"The little devil!" he said. "She's too quick by a lot."

Mammy palavers dealt with divorce and compensation, and the questions asked of the parties were as a rule primitive and impolite.

"Mammy palaver finish," he said, sharply, and now some of the fun died out of her face. "Money palaver begin," he continued, slowly, and now all the fun had gone. N'Gamba sat very still, her face wiped clean of expression, her eyes lowered—waiting.

Carmel Hardacre waited, too, oddly disturbed, so swift and complete a change had clouded that interview. There was something serious to be proposed, and perhaps to be refused—something unknown but alarming.

"For three days, N'Gamba, I camp by your village, and go about my business."

"One, two, t'ree days," said N'Gamba, with a nod.

"During those days eighty-five pounds of my Government's money are stolen. I want that money back."

Again N'Gamba did not reply. But she raised her eyes and kept them fixed and unwavering upon Colin Saundry's face. There was neither appeal in them nor fear. She watched him—sounded him, seeking—or was it not rather already knowing—the depths and the shallows of his nature. At the first, Carmel was conscious of a sense of outrage. The little naked black girl, mistress of thirty miserable Barotse families lost in a forest, was actually sitting in judgment over the white magistrate who had the high justice and the low in all these parts! By some strange mutation the proper authority of the one had passed into the possession of the other. Or so it seemed to Carmel—until she looked at Colin Saundry, and was reassured.

He stood at his ease, now slightly contemptuous, his left hand in his riding-breeches pocket, his right hand holding his switch hanging motionless at his side. If those two wills were fighting it was the man's which won. For it was N'Gamba who spoke now, not he.

"My people tief half a bit, yes, but big t'ings, no," and now her face was all appeal that he should be content and let his accusation fall.

But Saundry shook his head.

"It won't do, N'Gamba. I can't lose eighty-five sovereigns of my Government's money. For if I lose, I must pay."

IN the quiet which followed, Carmel suffered a new discomfort. She became aware that though N'Gamba's eyes never wavered from Colin Saundry's, and her face with all its prayer and appeal was turned to him, the prayer and appeal were now being diverted to her and with an overmastering force. It was no affair of hers, she tried to argue, but with a sting of indignation she felt that she was being drawn into it—enlisted to plead by the side of N'Gamba that the inquiry should cease here and now. Against her will, indeed, she took a little step towards Colin, but before she could speak he turned to her, and the mere arrogant look of him broke the spell which had been laid upon her. He turned back to N'Gamba.

"Listen to me! I go from here to-morrow upon my work. In seven days I return. When I return you find for me the money and the thief. It is an order."

It seemed that as he had released Carmel Hardacre from the compulsion put upon her, so he had broken down N'Gamba's opposition. As the fun had once died out of her face, so now did the appeal and the prayer. But it was not submission which took their place. On the contrary, Carmel had the illusion, that though no physical change took place, the little black plump girl grew into a creature formidable, potent. Carmel said to herself, wonderingly: "I thought her a little figure of fun." She saw her now as the immemorial wise woman of all the ages and all the races—the woman with all the secrets of the future locked away behind her eyes. It was no longer the theft of eighty-five sovereigns which was in question—but something of vast moment at which she could not guess.

N'Gamba stretched out her hand, and said in a curiously toneless and gentle voice:—

"Baas, I do what you say. But I catch some prayer."

"That I leave it all alone?" Saundry asked.

N'Gamba nodded her head.

"Baas—some t'ings—you meet 'um so. I t'ink Goddy go do 'um."

Colin Saundry received the message with a harsh burst of laughter.

"Isn't that just what a child cries," he exclaimed, "who's asked to explain how the apples have vanished?"

"But it wasn't a child who cried it," Carmel objected.

"It's a child, at any rate, now," George Hardacre added, with a grin. It was his only contribution to the dispute, and certainly he seemed to be right. For as they turned away to the gate in the palisade, scream upon scream followed them; and there was N'Gamba rocking her body from side to side upon her mat, beating the ground with the palms of her hands and sobbing like an infant in a paroxysm of passion. Colin Saundry smiled as he looked back.

"But she'll find the thief and the money,"

he said, with the completest confidence; "they're all frightened to death of her."

"Why?" Carmel asked.

"She's the greatest Rainmaker in these parts, and for people who live on mealies, rain at the right time in the proper moderation is a very important thing. The natives travel miles to give her presents and ensure her good-will. As you saw, she's getting a little too fat and prosperous."

"How in the world can she make rain?" said Carmel, and Colin Saundry shrugged his shoulders.

"That's her secret and her father's before her. I can't tell you how it's done or whether it's done. All I know is that she flew into a rage once and told her Barotses that they shouldn't have any rain. And they didn't. Then when they argued with her that they were starving, she flew into a greater rage still and told them she'd bring down so much rain upon them that she'd wash their mealies out of the ground for them. And she did."

Hardacre laughed loudly.

"Oh I say, I say, old fellow. A bit of a fairy story, what?"

"South Kensington would call it a fairy story, no doubt," Saundry replied, dryly. "But these things happened here in Africa."

Carmel felt again the little stab of fear. She, at all events, had not lived north of the Zambesi without knowing of mysteries not to be solved by the rules of logic.

"This is the country of magic," he had said, and she looked at him, the magistrate, and wondered whether it had not taken him to itself and taught him some of its dark secrets.

They were to break camp after an early luncheon. Carmel finished her packing quickly and crossed to the hut which they used as a mess-room. There she found Saundry alone, and put a question to him at once.

"What did that girl mean when she spoke of a mammy palaver?"

Colin Saundry chuckled.

"She was a bit too quick, wasn't she?"

"Why? What did she mean?"

"She meant—how many oxen I ought to pay your husband."

"I see." She lowered her eyes from Saundry's face, and added, "None, of course."

Colin nodded his head ruefully.

"No, none."

It seemed that he had upon the tip of his tongue the word "yet" to add to his "none"; and Carmel drew back a step as though he had uttered it. She had not yielded to him—yet, but she was not sure that she wasn't going to. The vividness of the man almost swept her off her feet, lifted her on to her toes, at all events. There were comparisons forced upon her each hour of each day. Even now she must glance back through the doorway to the hut in which her husband was packing. It wanted just some small extra thing to push her one way or the other. But she was conscious of a queer enmity towards Colin Saundry. She disliked where she almost loved.

It was her enmity which spoke now.

"That money? You are quite sure you've been robbed of it."

Colin Saundry's face flamed.

"Of course," he said, and there was certainly nothing but indignation in his voice. "I'm not likely to make a mistake in a matter like that. There were hundreds of opportunities. You and Hardacre were out shooting. I was on my circuit with my police. The camp has been practically deserted all day whilst we've been here."

Carmel agreed.

"That's true," she said. "Here's George."

"And here's luncheon," added Colin Saundry.

III

ON the evening of the seventh day the party returned to the same camp. The theft had been avoided as a topic during the week, by some sort of tacit agreement between Carmel and Colin Saundry, whilst Hardacre had become more and more silent and morose. But Carmel had not forgotten it, and now that they were back in the camp again the odd conviction seized upon her that they were all concerned in some alarming way with a matter of much deeper importance than the recovery of the money. An uneasy excitement made her restless, and touched Colin Saundry too. He sent a messenger into the village to announce his arrival to N'Gamba, and a little time afterwards lifted his head for silence.

"Listen!"

From a distance came the tapping of a solitary drum.

"Well, we've heard that a good many times and in a good many places during the last weeks," said Hardacre, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"I know," answered Colin Saundry.

But he still listened anxiously. They went out into the open after dinner. Above the trees half a mile away the loom of the village fires reddened the sky. From that quarter came the beating of the drum. It was louder now and they could all distinguish changes in its rhythm as though it sent a message in a code. For now it was spaced and monotonous, now it hurried, the taps following upon one another like sparks from

"What did N'Gamba mean when she spoke of a mammy palaver?" asked Carmel.
"She meant—how many oxen I ought to pay your husband."

an anvil; now the taps merged in one prolonged roll like a summons or an alarm. Colin Saundry listened with his head on one side and a frown upon his face.

"How far would the sound reach?" Carmel asked in a low voice.

"For miles. It fills the night." Then he tried to laugh. "I was wondering for a moment whether N'Gamba had taken it into her head to make some trouble for me to-morrow. But she wouldn't dare. No, I am sure. She wouldn't dare."

Trouble of the kind which Colin Saundry feared, N'Gamba certainly did not make. For no more quiet and orderly assemblage could be imagined than that which the village presented to the magistrate and his friends the next morning. It was, in fact, too quiet and orderly. For it was panic-stricken.

Carmel could not make head or tail of the

spectacle. It seemed to her that a sort of performance was being given which held the tribe spellbound, and she was sure that it was entirely displeasing to Colin Saundry. For she heard him curse N'Gamba under his breath, and add: "Well, it's got to go on now."

The tribe was seated on the ground in a semi-circle, with N'Gamba at the central point of the arc; and it watched a hideous old man who was mumming in the open space—watched him as though death waited at every turn of his feet. He was clothed in a leopard skin; dirty rags decorated his arms and ankles, and a string of shark's teeth hung about his neck. His hair was twisted up on the top of his head and bunched there with ivory skewers, and he held a calabash in his hands half-filled with old screws and bits of broken iron, and rattled it as he slowly twisted and stamped.

"Who's that comedian?" Hardacre asked, and suddenly Carmel knew. The three of them were standing at one end of the semi-circle and she had a clear view. The terror stamped upon the faces of all those savages squatting upon the ground told her, and explained, too, the anger of the official at her side. N'Gamba had called in a witch-doctor to find his money for him.

The old man, bent and decrepit and thin as a baboon, ceased his dance and sat cross-legged on the ground. From his calabash he fetched out four

bones, tossed them in the air, caught them like a juggler, and then set them in the shape of a diamond in front of him, altering them from time to time so that now the point of the diamond was directed to one man, now to another. And whilst he juggled with his bones, he whined rather than crooned some monotonous old chant which held in it the melancholy and the despair of all the ages.

"Curiouser and curiouser," Hardacre quoted.

From Colin Saundry there came a sharp hiss.

"Keep still!"

He knew his people and Hardacre did not. These Barotses, to a man, were bound in a spell by stark fright. What if the spell broke? And a little thing might break it. What if frenzy followed upon fright? A massacre might come of it. Even now a man half rose to his feet with a whimpering cry and squatted down again, as though he dared neither flee nor stay.

The witch-doctor unslung from his shoulders a buffalo horn. He took from his basket a rusty spoon, and, of all incongruous paraphernalia for a magician—a dirty old jar which had once

The white man was out there in the open space, wrestling like a madman with a buffalo horn which no one held.

held Keiller's marmalade. Comic enough, no doubt, elsewhere than in a forest of Africa amongst a tribe of panic-tortured savages. Here every commonplace, familiar little implement gave an added touch of the macabre to the whole ghoulish exhibition. Carmel knew from a sharp movement at her side that the climax of the grotesque rite was at hand. As terror chained that black sweeping curve of men, so suspense held her—or all of her but her throbbing heart.

The old pantaloon scooped from the jar a pitch-like grease, so rank that the evil smell of it tainted the air even where Carmel stood. He filled each end of the buffalo horn with it.

"That's his magic," said Saundry in a low voice, and the witch-doctor rose to his feet. Balancing the horn in his hands he scuttled suddenly with a quite horrible quick run to the point of the semi-circle opposite to Carmel. Before the first man he halted, and she witnessed a ritual which shocked her as an unexpected blow might do and drained her cheeks of all their colour. The old man extended the horn, and the other, his teeth chattering, his body trembling, took it with a humble reverence like one upon his knees. For a little while he held it upon the palms of his upturned hands, whilst standing over him the wizard muttered and whined. Carmel had, for a moment or two, a horrible illusion that she was present at and condoning by her presence a filthy parody of the sublime mystery of her faith. But the ceremony was too real to all these participants for such an error to persist. Because it was terrifying and real to them, it became real to her, real and compelling. The centuries fell away behind her. She was assisting at some ordeal which had been repeated and repeated in this still, sunlit glade in the forest, long before even the men from Babylon passed southwards to quarry their diamonds and their gold. And it could not fail! She was sure of it. She watched the old and hideous magician pass his buffalo horn from man to man, stooping, muttering. At some moment a man would rise, unable to endure his torment for one more second, and flinging up his arms, avow his guilt. She was sure of it. She waited for it with clenched hands and parted lips.

If only that had happened!

Right round the semi-circle the witch-doctor practised his sorcery in vain. He came to the last of the tribe and failed with him. He stood, a noisome creature to be imagined in a nightmare, his small eyes glinting, his wizened body an offence.

"Let me look at that horn," cried a voice by Carmel's side—and a strange voice it seemed—a voice which spoke under compulsion. Carmel turned towards her husband. It was he who had spoken, and he had the appearance of a man in a trance. Carmel looked suddenly at N'Gamba. N'Gamba was squatting on the ground, her head lowered upon her bosom, her eyes veiled. She was motionless as a statue. The recollection of the power which that little black girl had exercised over Carmel on this very spot flashed back into Carmel's mind. She would have yielded to it but for Saundry's interruption. He would interrupt again—yes—yes! Carmel looked at Saundry hopefully, but the man was rattled; he was angry; he was alarmed. For one fatal hour his easy assurance failed him. In the contest between these two, the wise woman with the lore of Africa and the white man from the West, the white man lost. Carmel saw her husband reach out his hands. She tried to cry out; her dry throat refused a sound. And the odious, horrible catastrophe happened in a second. As Hardacre grasped the horn, it leapt and twisted in his hands. Before even Colin Saundry could have seized and held him, he was out there in the open space, wrestling like a madman with a buffalo horn which no one held. There could never have been such ignominy. He was dragged about like a doll. Carmel was hardly aware that all the black men were on their feet leaping, screaming, laughing in their reprieve from fear, or that N'Gamba sat like an idol of stone, her head lowered, her arms crossed upon her breast. But she heard Colin Saundry's voice raised in a loud anger, she saw him cross to N'Gamba and fling at her some passionate words; and when she came to herself she was outside the palisade and one of Saundry's police was holding the stirrup of her horse.

THEY rode back to the camp without a word. But when they reached it, Hardacre said:—

"My hut must be searched."

Colin Saundry waived the suggestion aside.

"It was a trick. . . . No doubt they have some queer powers, these witch-men. Powers we don't understand. N'Gamba set him to it. By God she shall pay." He slipped his arm through Hardacre's. "You mustn't mind, Hardacre. We shall be away from here to-morrow."

Hardacre drew his arm away.

"I insist."

His pallor under the sunburn gave him the look of a man sick to death. Colin Saundry dropped his arms to his side.

"I wouldn't have had a ridiculous thing

like this happen for ten times eighty-five pounds. You shall have your way, of course."

And that night as they sat silently smoking about the camp fire, Saundry's head man came forward to them carrying a bag of sovereigns which he had just dug out of Hardacre's hut.

For a while no one uttered a word. A silence weighed about that fire such as might follow a dread verdict in a court of justice. A turtle dove, startlingly near, called suddenly from a bough of a tree and far away a baboon mumbled, and then by the fire Saundry shook the bag so that the sovereigns in it rattled. If he had been seeking for the one extra jolt which should thrust Carmel into a more definite position between the two men, he could have found nothing more decisive. He had got his money back, yes, but Carmel hated him.

"Of course it was a plant," he said. "N'Gamba must have found the thief, and then buried the money, knowing that we should return. I'll get it cleared up on my next circuit. Meanwhile here's the money and no harm done. There's absolutely no motive, of course. . . ."

He spoke with generosity, knowing—it must have been so—that there was all the motive in the world. But he was not allowed to expand his argument. Hardacre stood up and pulled at his moustache. Even at that moment, he could not be impressive. He alarmed neither of his companions. He did not even look at them. He just said in a dull voice :—

"I've had about enough of this."

Then he pulled a pistol out of his pocket, blew out his brains and pitched forward into the fire. Fortunately Carmel Hardacre fainted.

The affair, of course, could not end there. Slowly the facts were put together. Finally N'Gamba spoke. Saundry had sent her a message summoning her to meet him in the forest two days before he returned to his camp by her village. He came to the appointed place riding in great haste and alone. He bade her accuse Hardacre of the theft. No blame should fall on her, for the money would certainly be found in Hardacre's hut. N'Gamba wept, pleaded, yielded. But she chose her own way. She called in her witch doctor. She used her own dark gifts. You may give them what name you will, magic, witchcraft, mass hypnotism. It is wiser perhaps to accept the experience of Colin Saundry and say that the fairy story in Kensington happens in Africa. But from first to last N'Gamba never wavered from this assertion. She could have done nothing whatever had Hardacre been innocent.

Colin Saundry, however, got no profit from his scheme. He lost Carmel at the moment when he chinked the bag. He lost his position when N'Gamba told of their meeting in the forest, and thereafter he fell upon difficult days.

SOME years afterwards, when rather drunk at a shabby party in his lodgings behind the Bayswater Road, he was asked for his explanation of the story. He said, "Hardacre, of course, stole the money all right. I saw him going from my hut to his when I came down a hill towards the camp fire one night. The next morning I missed the money. Oh, yes. Hardacre stole the money all right." Then he laughed foolishly and bibulously, and added :—

"Some t'ings—you meet 'um so. I t'ink Goddy go do 'um."

DIVES PAYS HIS DEBTS

LORD WISHANGAR was showing his guests his black jacks, leather jerkins, and various Cromwellian weapons, when somebody asked if he possessed a "spring gun." Oddly enough nobody knew what a spring gun was. However, to gratify the curiosity of a charming young woman, Lord Wishangar produced another article intimately associated with spring guns.

"This is a man-trap," he said. "When I bought Wishangar I found it nailed up against a granary door. I had it taken down, cleaned, and oiled."

"It looks like an immense rat-trap."

"It works like a rat-trap. It broke, so I'm told, the legs of poachers."

"Ugh! Couldn't they open it and crawl away?"

"Not from this trap. When it shuts, it locks itself. You are horrified. But we must exercise our sense of historical perspective. When that man-trap was in use, petty larceny in Merrie England was punishable with death."

The man-trap and other relics of a less civilized age were in a sort of closet adjoining the Great Hall, where tea was served. Soon after tea the guests took leave of a whimsical host. He was left alone with a nephew, a niece, and his private secretary. Wishangar Abbey was famous; but the "county" regarded its owner as a "carpet-bagger" and an "outsider."

Certainly he was eccentric.

As Andrew Skurry he had accumulated a fortune by giving undivided attention to business. He had been nicknamed Hurry-Skurry, because of his too get-rich-quick methods. When he was past sixty, he retired from active business, and bought Wishangar Abbey with nearly everything in it, including an authentic ghost. He also bought, so the wags said, a barony, getting it reasonably cheap because he had no son to succeed him. He had never married. Nephews and nieces lay awake at night wondering to whom Dives would leave his gold. It was such a comfort to reflect that he couldn't take it with him——!

Why had he bought this magnificent old place? Why had he buried himself in it? The magnates were distressed, because old Andrew, as they called him, refused to preserve foxes or pheasants, returned few calls, and made it obvious to the meanest understanding that he preferred to be left alone.

Presently it leaked out that he was a valetudinarian obsessed with a determination to defeat the gentleman with the scythe. He lived by rule of thumb, he carried a clinical thermometer, wore goloshes if it was damp under foot, saw his doctor once a week, went to bed at ten to the tick, and read Edgar Wallace till he fell asleep.

And yet he had been a prince of industry. Even now, the few who knew him well maintained that his wits were alert as ever and his energies undiminished.

He entertained, handsomely enough, his own kith and kin. They came and went in ordered succession. The secretary, Captain Chance—known as "Capability" Chance—attended to everything. The wags spoke of him as the power behind the throne. The wags were wrong: the power sat on the throne.

At the moment Ursula and Gerald Skurry were in *attendance* (the young lady's word). These two were first cousins. After the fashion of the don't-care-a-damn brigade they agreed to disagree upon nearly everything. They agreed, however, that Uncle Andrew was the apex of the world's pyramid of "cranks." Ursula refused to kowtow to the autocrat. Her brother Henry was no longer asked to the Abbey, because he, too, was outspoken. Secretly Ursula cherished the forlorn hope that she might, if she restrained her nimble tongue, bring about a reconciliation between Uncle Andy and Henry.

II.

THAT night, after his chief went to bed, Chance slipped away to his room, where he proposed to work till midnight. Ursula believed that Chance was overworked and underpaid, but really she knew nothing about it. He looked rather harassed.

At a quarter past ten Ursula and Gerald came in together.

"Here we are," said Ursula, expectantly.

Chance indicated two chairs. Then he walked to a small safe, opened it, took out a letter, and sat down at his desk. By his desk was another table piled high with other letters. Chance spoke, as usual, quietly and courteously :—

"I want your advice. I—I," he hesitated, as if picking his words. "I am between the devil and the deep sea. The devil," he flickered the sheet of paper in his hand, "is a blackmailer; my chief is the deep sea."

Ursula opened her mouth and shut it, having nothing to say. Gerald began to fill a pipe. Both these young people were well aware that "Capability" Chance had earned his nickname. He had, indeed, forgotten more than they ever knew—or were likely to know—about the idiosyncrasies of his employer. Amused and possibly flattered by the silence of the cousins, he went on leisurely :—

"My chief expects orders to be obeyed. He refuses to be badgered by begging-letter writers and the like."

"Do you read all my uncle's letters, Chance?" asked Gerald.

"Nearly all."

"And then?"

"I destroy most of 'em."

"Gives you a free hand about that, eh?"

"Yes. Every morning, after breakfast, I make three heaps of the letters. One, the biggest, he never sees. Out of pile number two I do now and again re-read some communication which I may then place on pile number three, a very tiny pile which he both sees and reads."

Ursula nodded, not too interested. Gerald said, excitedly :—

"Look here, has my uncle read a letter which I wrote to him about a week ago?"

"No—not yet."

"My God! You take a lot upon yourself, Chance."

"A lot is thrust on me. Your letter would have upset him. I knew that you were coming here; and I knew that you would speak to me about this quietly."

"Has the old man any bowels of compassion?"

"None, I fear, so far as loans without security are concerned."

"Of all the damned, cold-blooded——"

"I'm his paid servant, Skurry."

"His most humble and obedient——"

"Perfectly."

"And I'm his brother's son."

"That's why I asked you and Miss Skurry to come here to-night after your uncle had gone to bed."

Ursula said, impatiently :—

"So selfish of you, Gerry, to butt in when I'm so thrilled I can't sit still. Who is this blackmailer?"

"He writes anonymously, as they generally do. I'll read his typed letter."

He did so.

"All hail, Dives!——You may guess who is writing this letter. I consider that you owe me five thousand pounds. If you pay that debt, we'll cry quits. If you don't I shall set about you after a fashion peculiarly disagreeable to you. I have been studying your ways. Knowing you as I do, I am sure that you will take no notice of this letter. But, mark this, within forty-eight hours you will have your first warning, and I shall not tell you what that warning will be. *It won't hurt you.* If you remain recalcitrant, you will then suffer a trifling injury, enough to jog your memory. The third warning will be lethal.

"You can put the cash, fifty hundred-pound notes, in that nesting-box which is on the yew tree close to the top pool in the water garden. I warn you that any attempts to trace the notes or to capture me will mean 'black-out' for you. You can, of course, defeat me by making a prisoner of yourself, but, even then, my chance to get at you must turn up sooner or later.

"Yours not at all lovingly, LAZARUS.

"P.S.—If you will be good enough to insert a line in the 'Personal' column of

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by OLDHAM

the *Morning Post*, stating that Dives pays his debts, I shall assume that you have met this little obligation in the wise and right spirit."

"Lazarus," said Ursula, "ought to be hung, drawn, and quartered."

"Unfortunately," said Chance, "in this country we cannot take the law into our own hands. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that I hid myself in the water garden, and shot this fellow as he was dipping his hand into the nesting-box, I should be charged with homicide if not murder. If, instead, I called in the police, or employed a private detective, both obvious things to do, I should be disobeying my chief. Lastly, if I lay this letter before him, he will be much upset. He knows that threatening letters are sent to him; he has instructed me to deal with them as best I can."

The cousins looked at each other. Gerald shrugged his shoulders and held his tongue. Ursula betrayed more indignation.

"Such a foul, cowardly thing to do."

Impulsively Ursula laid her hand upon her uncle's arm. "Did you come here because you had a hunch that some sword is impending over your head?" she asked.

"This letter was opened by me three days ago," said Chance. "The forty-eight hours are up. Has he had any sort of warning?"

He glanced at Gerald who replied irritably:—

"How should I know? I keep out of his way. Ursula tags about after him."

"I don't. Heavens!"

She looked so frightened that Chance regretted calling her in. Before he could speak, she went on: "I—I believe that the first warning came just before dinner, when I was alone with him in the new Italian Garden."

"The men there stop work at five."

"What has that to do with it?"

"After five it would be easy for any person to slip into the gardens. Assume that Lazarus found the nesting-box empty; he might, if he stayed on the premises, deliver his first warning. Forgive me for interrupting you."

"We were in the Italian Garden, Captain Chance. Uncle was explaining to me the new extension. There was a lot of sand where the men had been mixing concrete. Part of the sand was still damp. On it, with the end of a stick, somebody had scribbled in big capital letters 'ACHTUNG.'"

"What does that mean?" asked Gerald.

"It's German for 'Beware,' a very common word. I thought nothing of it. I supposed that one of the workmen was a German, and that 'Achtung' was a friendly warning to mind your step, and keep out of the wet concrete."

"Quite. We are up against a clever fellow. He may be one of the workmen. It is obvious that he is well educated, that he has studied your uncle's ways, and that he is within touch. Now—for your advice, Miss Skurry."

"Don't tell Uncle."

"And what do you say, Gerald?"

"Tell him. He's as jumpy as a cat about his health. He may know who this fellow is. And he may pay up, simply because five thou. is less than nothing to him compared with peace of mind. Ursula has voted; I've voted; you have the casting-vote as chairman."

As he spoke the door opened.

Lord Wishangar, in dressing-gown and slippers, entered.

III.

HE said testily:—

"What are you two idlers doing in this room?"

Gerald replied:—

"Chance asked us to come here to discuss a matter rather vital to you."

"To me?"

He addressed Ursula, who made a gesture indicating annoyance. Impulsively she jumped up, went to her uncle and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Did you come here because you had a hunch that some—some sort of—sword, yes, *sword*, is impending over your head?"

The old man turned to his secretary.

"What is she prattling about? Did she say—sword?"

"She did."

"Over my head?"

"Yes."

"And you two youngsters thought that you could, perhaps, remove this sharp weapon and save my head?"

The youngsters held their tongues.

"I had no hunch," said Lord Wishangar, after a short pause, "none. I remembered something of no particular importance which I wished to discuss quietly with you, Chance. Please explain," he looked at Chance, "my niece's use of the arresting word—sword."

Chance explained. A minute later, Lord Wishangar sat coiled up in a chair reading the letter.

"Lazarus," he observed, "is a liar. I give you my word that I haven't a notion who wrote this. Burn it, Chance, here and now. No. I'll keep it."

"If you will allow me to deal with the rascal——"

"I have suffered from this form of persecution. You—you were right to keep this from me, but I don't yet understand why my niece was told."

Again Chance explained.

"I felt miserable, Uncle. I—I wish you would go to bed and leave Captain Chance to act for you."

"I'd sooner sit here and study your actions and—reactions."

He spoke ironically. Ursula laughed.

"You challenge me, Uncle?"

"Yes, my dear, I do. But I bar calling in the police or engaging a private detective. All the same," he chuckled.

"His wits are quicker than ours," said Ursula to Chance. "You have thought of something, Uncle?"

"I have thought of something melodramatic. To-morrow Chance might go to London. You can get anything in London, if you can pay for it. Chance might buy a deadly serpent, say a krait. This he could place in the nesting-box, after stopping the small round hole. Then when our blackmailer lifted the lid and plunged his hand into the secret hiding-place, the punishment would fit the crime."

"What a perfectly splendid idea, Uncle?"

"If it came off according to plan, we should have a corpse on our hands. And,"

Ursula examined the chair. It had collapsed because both back legs had been nearly sawn through.

"The second warning," said Lord Wishangar.

he chuckled again, "a deadly reptile might be loose in the water garden."

"I hate to do nothing," observed Chance.

His chief became more alert.

"Ursula——"

"Uncle——?"

"I have had the first warning. That word: '*Achtung*.'"

"Nothing escapes you," growled Chance.

"My next warning," said Lord Wishangar, thoughtfully, "is to take the form of a slight injury. I'm prepared to risk that, but it means a forty-eight hours' wait. Damn this fellow! He knows my weak spot."

"Do think of something else, Uncle Andy. If all four of us put our heads together——"

"You two can go," said the old man. "I'll talk this over with Chance. Off with you."

"Good night," said Ursula.

"Tchah! *Good* night. I sha'n't sleep a wink."

The young people went out, regretfully.

Lord Wishangar waited for a few seconds before he said in a low voice :—

"Chance, I'm upset. There is more in this than meets the eye. This rascal may be a member of my own household. Still, I repeat, I'm willing to risk a trifling injury. Let us mark time for another forty-eight hours."

IV.

THE second warning was unmistakable. And once more Ursula happened to be present when it was delivered. Each day, rain or shine, Lord Wishangar walked a measured two miles before luncheon along a gravel path skirting the gardens and part of the park. At the end of the first mile he would enter a small temple and sit down for a minute or two to smoke a cigarette.

Then he would walk the second mile, go to his bedroom for a change and "rub down," and be ready, at one precisely, to eat with appetite a grilled slip sole, rusks and cream cheese, and to sip a Berncastler Moselle of Dr. Thanisch's bottling.

He walked into the temple as usual, followed by Ursula, and "plumped" into a chair which collapsed. Ursula, with a startled cry, helped him to regain his feet. She could see that he was more shaken than hurt. She attempted to interpret the expression on his face and failed. Obviously his wits were busy. Leaning upon her arm, he sat down upon a stone bench encircling the temple.

"Are you all right, Uncle?"

He nodded and pointed at the broken chair. Ursula examined it, and another exclamation escaped her. The stout teak chair, especially made under the noble owner's directions, had collapsed because both back legs had been nearly sawn through. The girl turned in dismay to stare at the victim.

"Yes, yes, the second warning. I was right."

"Right?'

"I told Chance that this rascal was one of us."

"One of—*us?*"

"Not you, my dear, not you, but somebody who can come or go without question; one of my own people."

"How perfectly awful to think that!"

"You must think that," he snapped, "if you think at all."

"Well, I do think it," she snapped back, "but I hated to say so. Uncle, you will call in the police now, won't you?"

His small eyes sparkled, his jaw set.

"No."

'If you won't send for the police, will you let me wire for Henry."

"Henry hates me and I hate him."

"He doesn't hate you, he——" she broke off, regarding him angrily.

"Go on."

"Henry pities you—so do I."

To her surprise (and admiration) he lit a cigarette and began to chuckle.

"P-please don't chuckle, Uncle."

"The rascal means business, eh?"

"He's trying to put the wind up you."

"Perfectly. And pitting his brains against mine?"

"Shall I fetch Captain Chance?"

"No. I shall walk the other mile with you."

He did so—in silence.

V.

WHAT passed between Chance and her uncle after luncheon was not told to Ursula at the time, but, next morning, glancing at the "Personal Column" of the *Morning Post*, she read to her dismay :—

Dives pays his debts.

He had weakened. Gérald and she talked it over before they saw Chance. Gerald's attitude enraged Ursula.

"Depend upon it he *has* done the dirty on somebody."

"I don't believe that."

"He's done the dirty on us—all of us. He orders us to come and stay here. Do we know where we are? We don't. I say that he takes a malicious pleasure in seeing us on the anxious seat."

"You can speak for yourself. I'm not on the anxious seat. He made his money; he has a right to do what he pleases with it. You've always been a little man of great expectations. I'm a little woman of no expectations. I'm ever so sorry for poor Uncle——"

"Poor Uncle! Help——!"

"He's made so much but he's lost more. Still, I always credited him with pluck——"

"Drop the 'P.'"

"It's terrible to me that he should stand and deliver."

"Stand and deliver," jeered Gerald, "stolen goods. No man can make what he's made honestly."

"You'd take every bob he's made, if he left his pile to you."

"Yes, my pet, I should."

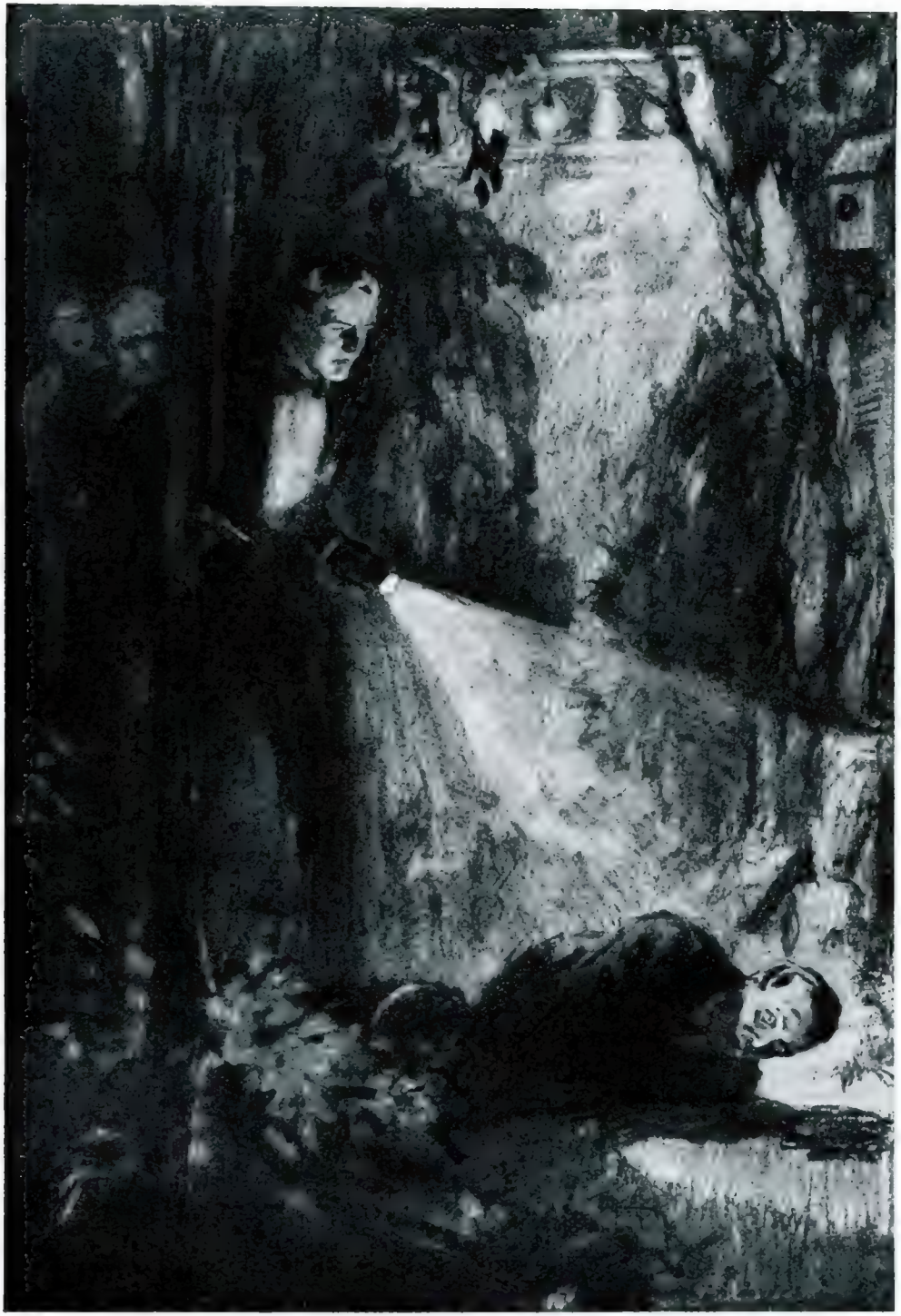
"I hate you, Gerald, when you talk like this. And I hope with all my heart that Uncle will outlive you."

Gerald grinned at her as she strode away.

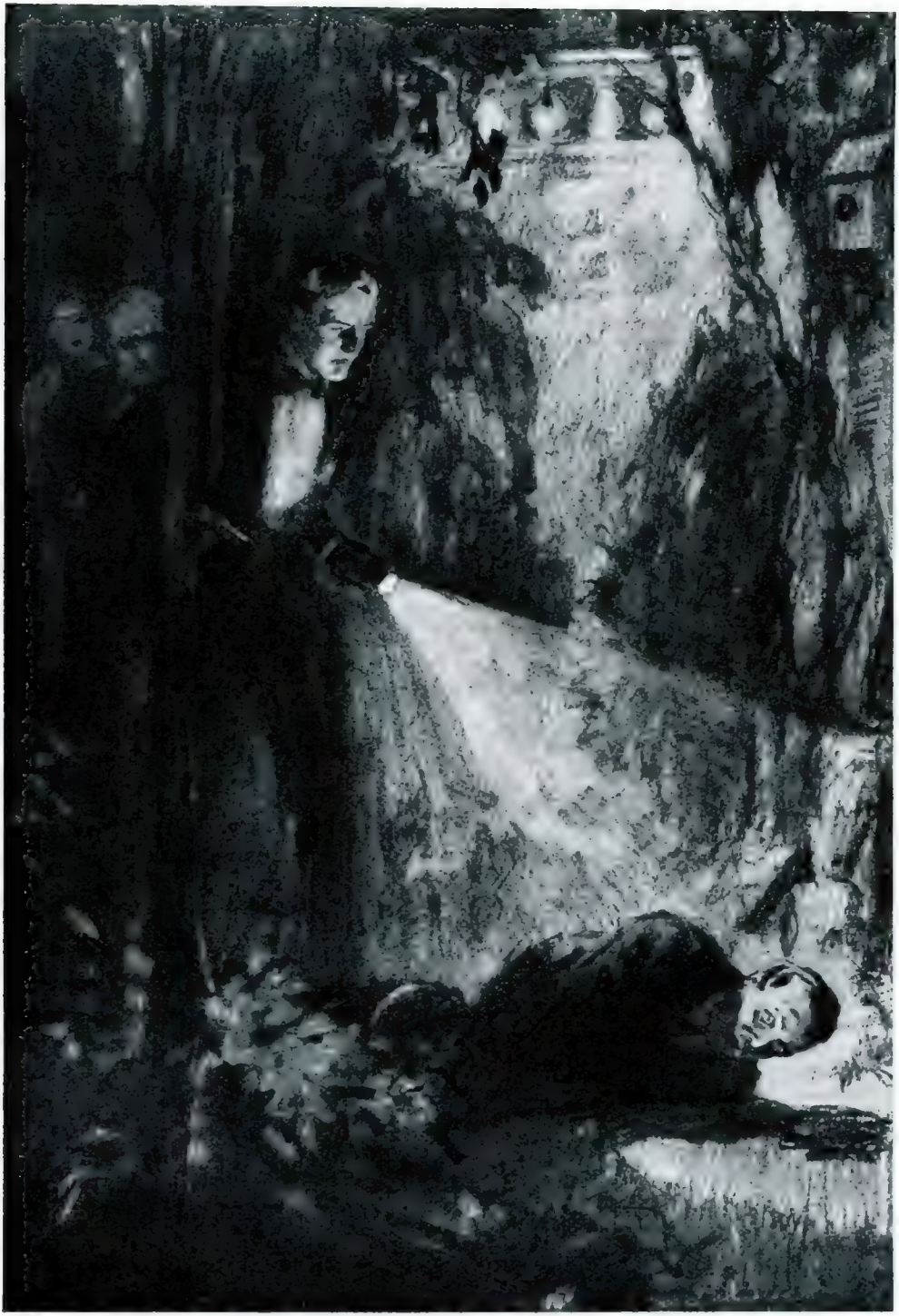
Boiling inwardly she sought Chance.

"Did you," she asked, "advise Uncle to surrender unconditionally?"

"On the contrary. I suggested police protection—and a fight to a finish. I believe this to be blackmail and bluff. When he refused, as I feared he would, to call in



Automatic in hand, Henry ran towards the yew and flashed his torch upon what was writhing on the ground.



Automatic in hand, Henry ran towards the yew and flashed his torch upon what was writhing on the ground.

careful watch upon all approaches to the garden. In return she whispered back that her uncle had placed the notes brought from London in the nesting-box before he went to bed. More, in her presence, he had issued final orders to both Gerald and Chance. Under threat of his extreme displeasure, they were to stay in the house.

In the basket, the thoughtful Ursula had placed sandwiches, cake, and a flask of whisky.

There was no door to the old tool-house. Henry carried a torch, but dared not use it. A little manipulation of the masses of ivy opened up a moonlit view of the pool and the yew beyond it.

Both brother and sister had discussed at the inn the expediency of removing the notes from the nesting-box before the blackmailer arrived. Ursula suggested this. Henry pointed out that the notes must be found *on* the criminal; and then he would get at least fourteen years. If he resisted arrest, Henry proposed to shoot him.

The moon slowly sank out of sight.

Starlight illumined the water garden.

It was a lovely night of mid-September, but very dark in the water garden, where beeches interlaced their boughs above the tiny pools and cascades. The water tinkled gaily.

They heard the clock in the stable yard strike midnight. Shortly afterwards, Henry pressed Ursula's arm. Each admitted afterwards that they felt rather than heard somebody approaching. After an interminable pause there were unmistakable sounds: the crackling of a twig, the displacement of a pebble, the rustle of grass. Within a minute at most, the watchers might expect to glimpse a shadow stealing across the turf which led to the yew. Under it no grass grew, only ground ivy.

Again Henry gripped Ursula's arm. They could hear, to their confounding, steps coming nearer, approaching their hiding-place. Hands fumbled at the masses of ivy. Henry pushed Ursula behind him. Doing this, he made a slight noise. In the silence that followed he could hear breathing, a queer, familiar wheezing. Ursula gasped as she heard Henry's whisper:—

"Come in, Uncle Andrew; we have a family party here."

It was no moment for explanations. Uncle joined nephew and niece. It became a guessing-party for all of them.

VIII.

AN hour later, the vigil came to an end. Once more Henry heard furtive steps, hardly audible. And this time a shadow stole across the turf beside the pool.

Something snapped, not a twig. A deep groan followed, punctuated by a scream from Ursula. Automatic in hand, Henry ran towards the yew. He flashed his torch upon what was writhing on the ground beneath the nesting-box. Behind him he heard the old man's thin, querulous tones:—

"Keep quiet, Chance, and we'll release you."

IX.

THE curtain fell upon the tragedy, or comedy, half an hour later — in Chance's room. Ursula administered first-aid. The leg was horribly bruised but the bone was not broken. The man whom few could measure accurately had the last words.

"I knew that you were the man, Chance. I shall temper justice with mercy, because you have protected me against everybody except yourself. You were so sure of yourself and me, so sure, too, that I would not call in the police, that you had the impudence to type that letter upon your own machine. My manservant and I did the rest. I," he chuckled, "thought of using the man-trap, and you escaped a broken shinbone because we wrapped flannel round the iron jaws. You have been speculating disastrously. I knew that. Had you come to me and asked for five thousand pounds I would have given it to you."

"So easy to say that now," growled Chance.

"Perfectly. And so easy to prove that I mean what I say. Here is the money. Take it upon one condition, my friend. I shall have breakfast in bed to-morrow. When I come downstairs, let me find you gone. In some ways it will be difficult to replace you, but I had thoughts, some time ago, of offering your billet to my nephew, Henry. We have had misunderstandings, he and I, but honest misunderstandings in the past are quite likely to lead to happier understandings in the future."

He chuckled—and went out of the room.

THE LETTERS OF

The correspondence of forty years now published for the first time, authorized for publication in "The Strand Magazine" by Sir Henry Fielding Dickens, K.C., with a commentary by Bernard Darwin.

TO HIS

Charles Dickens as he appeared in 1836, in the early years of his friendship with Thomas Beard.

NEARLY a hundred years ago, in 1832, Charles Dickens began a correspondence with his friend Thomas Beard, which was destined to be carried on without interruption till Dickens's death in 1870. The two were firm friends even before they were young reporters in the Gallery of the House of Commons; they remained ever afterwards on the warmest and most affectionate terms, and in his letters to Beard, Dickens discussed freely and intimately the events of his public and private life.

These letters have never before been published. Sir Henry Dickens, the only surviving child of the writer, has now approved of their publication in THE STRAND MAGAZINE, and in this and forthcoming issues there will be printed a selection of the most interesting of them, together with some, likewise never before published, to Thomas Beard's brother, Frank Carr Beard. Those who already know Dickens's letters know that they are among the most racy and delightful in the English language, and that as a letter-writer he kept throughout his life that natural bubbling spontaneity of high spirits which marked his earlier books. They know what to expect and will rejoice accordingly at the chance of reading more, but there are also many people who love Dickens's books and yet have never read his letters. Here is their chance to repair these shortcomings. They will soon realize that Dickens's genius was so profuse that he could on the spur of the moment, and for the pleasure of a single friend, dash off little pieces of inimitable description, any one of which would have made the fame of a lesser man.

The letters begin a few days before Dickens's twentieth birthday, at the time when he was working as a shorthand writer at the Doctors' Commons Courts. A little later he entered the Press Gallery, where his father, John Dickens, was already a reporter. He worked first for the *True Sun* and the *Mirror of Parliament*, and in his twenty-third year he joined the *Morning Chronicle*, of the staff of which Beard was already a member. The two constantly worked in double harness on the occasion of reporting some important speech outside London.

Dickens seems in general to have been rather reserved with his fellow reporters,

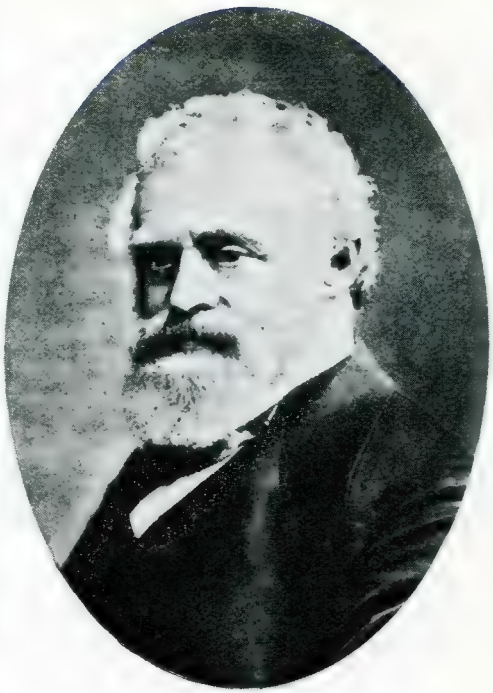
Charles Dickens

OLDEST FRIEND

and Beard was his one intimate friend in the Gallery. Their relations were never afterwards affected by the fact that one of them attained, while still very young, an astounding fame and popularity, and the other remained comparatively obscure. In these letters we find Dickens always cordial and affectionate, regularly pressing Beard to dine or stay at his house, and trying, when he can, to put work in his way, notably in asking him to be his secretary and companion on a projected reading tour in Australia. Beard was often present at the festivities with which Dickens loved to celebrate such events as his birthday or the finishing of a book. Forster, in his *Life*, specially mentions him at the cottage at Petersham, which Dickens took for summer holidays. Jolly parties were invited to play at various outdoor games, and "Dickens held his own even against such accomplished athletes as Maclise and Mr. Beard."

Beard was godfather to Dickens's eldest son Charles, and when, in 1886, this son was proposing to publish a jubilee edition of "Pickwick," he asked leave to dedicate it to Beard. The dedication, in the handwriting of the younger Charles Dickens, is reproduced on page 457.

The brother, Frank Carr Beard, was not only a close friend, but was also Dickens's doctor during the later years of his life and was regularly consulted by him when his health began to show signs of failing under the strain of overwork. The letters to him run from 1859 to the year of Dickens's



Thomas Beard, to whom this correspondence, covering a period of forty years, was addressed.

death, 1870, and will appear in a later number.

Now let us begin on February 4th, 1832, when Dickens was within three days of his twentieth birthday. This was some time before his first article, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," had appeared in print in the *Monthly Magazine* and filled him with overpowering pride and pleasure.

He was living with his father and mother and this first letter is from their house. With the exception of one written as a schoolboy it is the earliest known letter of the immortal creator of Pickwick.

70, Margaret Street, Cavendish Square.
Saturday February 4th [1832].

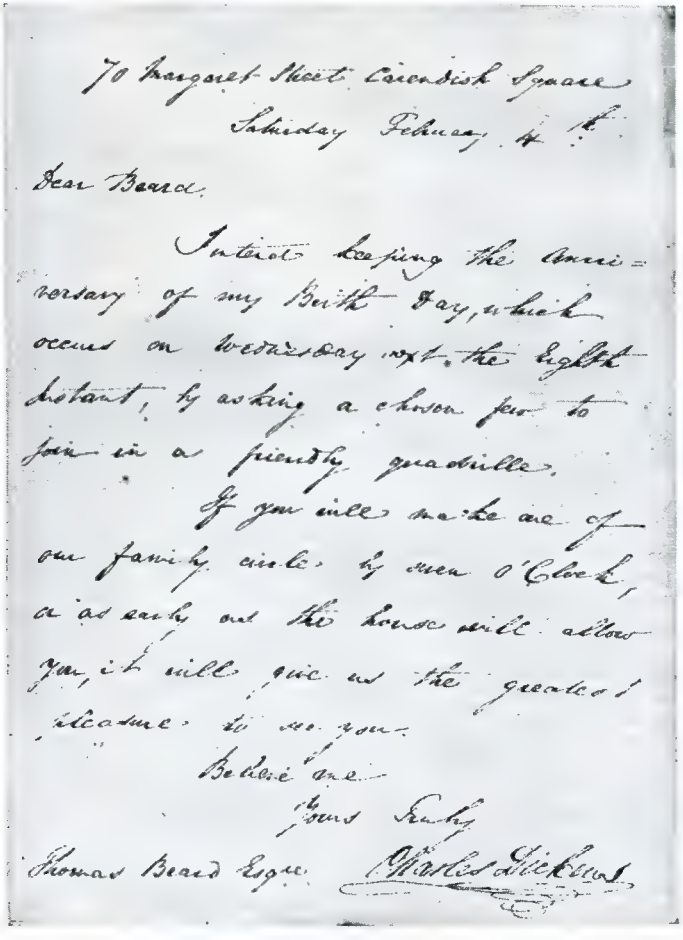
Dear Beard,

I intend keeping the anniversary of my Birthday, which occurs on Wednesday next the eighth instant, by asking a chosen few to join in a friendly quadrille.

If you will make one of our family circle by seven o'clock, or as early as the House will allow you, it will give us the greatest pleasure to see you.

Believe me,
Yours truly,
CHARLES DICKENS.

Thomas Beard Esq.



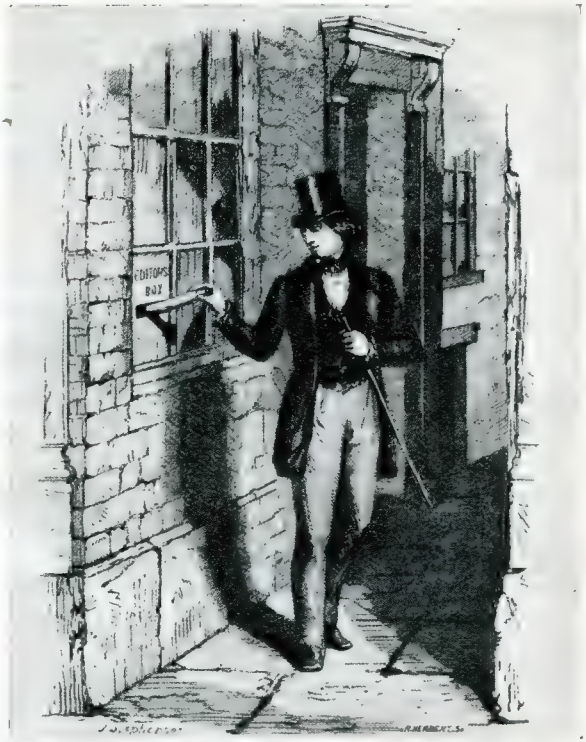
The earliest known letter of Charles Dickens, with the exception of one written when a schoolboy. This letter is now published for the first time.

As a matter of precise fact, Dickens's birthday was the 7th and not the 8th of February. Probably it was celebrated as nearly on the right day as convenient, for in the next year there is a similar invitation to his birthday party—a coming of age this time—on February 11th. With the letter is enclosed a solemn invitation from Dickens's mother:—

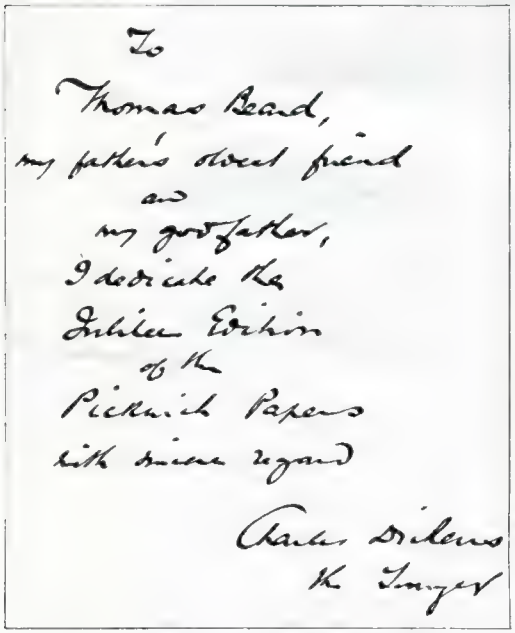
> Mrs. Dickens requests the pleasure of Mr. Beard's company at an evening party on Monday the 11th inst.
>
> Quadrilles
> 8 o'clock.
>
> 18, Bentinck St.
> Manchester Square.

The next year we find Dickens on the point of setting up on his own account in chambers. The reason was that his father, after a period of comparative prosperity, found himself once more in those "difficulties" which are familiar to us as Mr. Micawber's. John Dickens had retired from the Navy Pay Office in 1825, and his pension, together with his earnings on the Press, seem to have made the family more comfortable than ever before. Mr. Micawber's rule for happiness—annual income £20, annual expenditure £19 19s. 6d.—was not, however, one that John Dickens was likely

to keep for ever. At any rate, the family had to give up its house and separate in different directions, and Dickens's individual resources were temporarily straitened in consequence. As a single young man, he was by no means badly off. He was paid a weekly salary of five guineas by the *Chronicle*, and this he began to supplement by his writings The *Monthly Magazine*, being in low water, could not afford to pay for those sketches that we now know as "Sketches by Boz"; he had thereupon looked out for another market, and found one in the *Evening Chronicle*. Dickens proposed to contribute some "light papers in the style of his Street Sketches." These instantly became popular, and led to the invitation to write for Seymour's drawings the letterpress which we now know as "Pickwick." Meanwhile, however, moving house was expensive, and he had to borrow a little money from Beard. One "Thursday morning," in 1834, he writes from Bentinck Street.



An old print depicting Dickens putting his first literary contribution into an editor's letter box.


To
Thomas Beard,
my father's oldest friend
and
my godfather,
I dedicate the
Jubilee Edition
of the
Pickwick Papers
with sincere regard
Charles Dickens
the Younger

A facsimile of the dedication to Thomas Beard of the Jubilee Edition of the "Pickwick Papers," by Charles Dickens's eldest son.

Dear Tom,

With some difficulty I have fortunately persuaded the Bill Broker to renew the bill for two months on paying the usual *moderate* bonus tomorrow.

My salary for a week or two is so completely mortgaged by the expenses consequent on our removal, that I really have no resource but your kind offer. If your expectation of receiving some money has been realised, will you lend me £5 for a short time? If you have been disappointed, I shall esteem your kindness quite as highly as if you had had the money, and if you have not, it will be of the most essential service to me.

In another letter of much the same date he discloses the troubles of the Dickens family, at the request of his mother.

Bentinck Street,
Saturday Evening. [1834.]

Dear Tom,

I arrived from Birmingham at 7 this

morning and remained at the office until 10, correcting the proofs of the "*Whack*" for a second Edition. I am rather fagged as you may suppose, having perpetrated four columns in as many hours before I left the town of dirt, iron-works, radicals, and hardware.

If I had not a little business to transact on my own account to-night, I should, tired as I am, run the chance of finding you at home, for the purpose of saying a few words to you on a very distressing subject. My mother appears most anxious that your sister and yourself should be made acquainted with the situation in which she is placed. Knowing the anxiety of her feelings on this head, and concurring most sincerely with her in valuing the friendship of yourself and family most highly, I think it better to spare her the pain of making any communication, by writing to you myself at once. I do this with the less reluctance as I have already, more than once, hinted to you my fears that the state of my father's affairs, and his want of attention to them, would render a change in our situation, imperative.

The fact is simply this—for a time, at all events, we must disperse ourselves as best we can, consistently with a reasonable hope of consulting the interests of all. My father, I apprehend, will not re-join his family for some time; my mother and two sisters will reside in the immediate neighbourhood of our present Lodgings—I hope in comfortable quarters, where they are not strangers—and I, taking Frederick with me, to instruct and provide for as I best can, shall repair to Chambers in Furnival's Inn.

This is no great mystery after all, and perhaps will prove a source of but little surprise to you; but as I wish you to know the real state of the case without delay, and as I know my Mother does the same, I have no hesitation in confiding it to you, to disclose just as much, or as little of, as you think proper. There may be something of selfishness in this: for one never values friends so highly as in seasons of adversity, when their loss would be most felt. You may attribute this communication to what cause you please—as far as I am concerned I can have no wish for concealment, and to my mother and sisters I know it will be a relief to find that you, and yours, know the worst.

I will conclude this long and gloomy epistle by saying that after much trouble and anxiety, I think I have, in conjunction with a friend of ours, succeeded in making the best general arrangement that could possibly be effected. We have much more cause for cheerfulness than despondency after all; and as I for one am determined to see everything in as bright a light as possible, having, thank God, little at present to fear on my own score, and not much on theirs, I will not add another word on the subject.

The move to Furnival's Inn was shortly afterwards made, and we soon find Dickens asking Beard to dine with him there, as soon as his rooms become habitable. It is one of many such invitations, most of them written in much more cheerful and flamboyant spirits.

> On returning from the city today, I found, contrary to my expectations, that my man had not sent. As I have *no dishes*, no curtains, and no french polish, I think we had better, for all our comforts, defer the projected flare until Saturday—on one condition: namely, that my seeing you on that evening, will not prejudice your dining with me on Sunday.

The difficulties still continued to some small extent in 1835, as we see from the next letter dated from Furnival's Inn on "Wednesday morning."

> If you are in cash at present, and can lend me a couple of sovereigns until *Saturday Week*, you will oblige me very greatly. I would say Saturday next, but I have got a bill to make up, which anticipates my receipt for this week both from The Chronicle and Dowling: and I therefore think it better to name the latest day to prevent any disappointment. You will perhaps send me a reply by the Bearer.
>
> I am in great distress of mind just now. Both Catherine and Mrs. Hogarth are laid up with the scarlet fever, which they both took in an extraordinarily sudden manner on Sunday last, after spending the preceding evening with me. I suppose in the ordinary course of things, I shall have it next, as I am, you will readily believe, by the bed-side of the former every day.

Catherine is, of course, Miss Hogarth, to whom he was now engaged. Dowling is Mr. Vincent Dowling, an acquaintance in the Gallery of whom Dickens always spoke warmly. He was the Editor of the famous *Bell's Life in London*, to which Dickens contributed some "Scenes and Characters."

The next three letters, also in 1835, tell something of Dickens's arduous life in dashing about the country on his reporting errands. Mr. Beard was never tired in later

Photo: T. W. Tyrrell.

Mary Hogarth, Dickens's young sister-in-law, whose early death was a terrible blow to him.

From a painting by H. K. Browne ("Phiz")

Two letters in May, 1835, show something of what he had to endure. The first he writes from Wincanton.

Dear Tom,

I arrived here (57 miles from Exeter) at 8 yesterday evening having finished my whack at the previous stage. I arranged with Neilson, whom I occasionally saw on the course of my journey, that I would stop where he did: and finding him housed here, I ordered dinner, beds, and breakfasts for two. I am happy to say that our friend Unwin, when on duty, is the most zealous, active, and indefatigable little fellow I ever saw. I have now, not the slightest doubt (God willing) of the success of our Express. On our first stage we had very poor horses. At the continuation of the second, The Times and I changed horses together: they had the start two or three minutes; I bribed the post boys tremendously and we came in literally neck and neck—the most beautiful sight I ever saw. The next stage, your humble caught them before they had changed; and the next Denison

life of saying that "there never was such a shorthand writer," and this was the opinion not only of the other reporters in the Gallery, but of Dickens himself. The work, when he went to report in the country, had to be done in circumstances of difficulty that today sound ludicrous, but must sometimes have been nearly heartbreaking. Years afterwards, in 1865, he told something of them in a speech. "I have often," he said, "transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been for a young man extremely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand by the light of a dark lantern in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour." Miry roads, wheel-less carriages, drunken post boys—he suffered from them all, and was no doubt thinking of those terrific journeys when he described the pursuit of Jingle and Miss Wardle.

Photo: T. W. Tyrrell.

Catherine Hogarth, whom Dickens married in 1836.

From a miniature

preceded Unwin about two minutes, leaving Neilson here to return to Exeter to-morrow evening and I to get up by the Telegraph at 11. The roads were *extremely heavy*, and as *they* had 4, I ordered the same at every stage and empowered Unwin to do the same until he met his horses; indorsing on the parcel that the rain rendered it a matter of *absolute necessity*.

The second shows how he got home again, and neither of them need any comment, except perhaps that *The Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* were particularly deadly rivals and were in the habit of attacking each other with the splendid venom of the two Eatanswill Editors, Mr. Pott and Mr. Slurk.

We are reminded of Eatanswill by the next letter, which should actually have been placed before those two, for it was written on Sunday Morning, 9th Jan., 1835. Dickens had gone down to Chelmsford for the election and his letter is written from the Black Boy Hotel in that town.

I wish of all things that you were with me. Barring the grime of solitude I have been very comfortable since I left town and trust I shall remain so until I return, which I shall do about the latter end of the week, unless I receive orders from the office to the contrary.

Owing to the slippery state of the roads on the morning I started, I magnanimously declined the honour of driving myself, and hid my dignity in the Inside of a Stage Coach. As the Election here had not commenced, I went on to Colchester (which is a very nice town) and returned here on the following morning. Yesterday I had to start at 8 o'clock for Braintree—a place 12 miles off: and being unable to get a saddle horse, I actually ventured on a gig,—and what is more, I actually did the four and twenty miles without upsetting it. I wish to God you could have seen me tooling in and out of the banners, drums, conservative emblems, horsemen, and go-carts with which every little green was filled as the processions were waiting for Sir John Tyrell and Baring. Every time the horse heard a drum he bounded into the hedge, or to the left side of the road; and every time I got him out of that, he bounded into the hedge on the right side. When he *did* go however, he went along admirably. The road was clear when I returned, and with the trifling exception of breaking my whip, I flatter myself I did the whole thing in something like style.

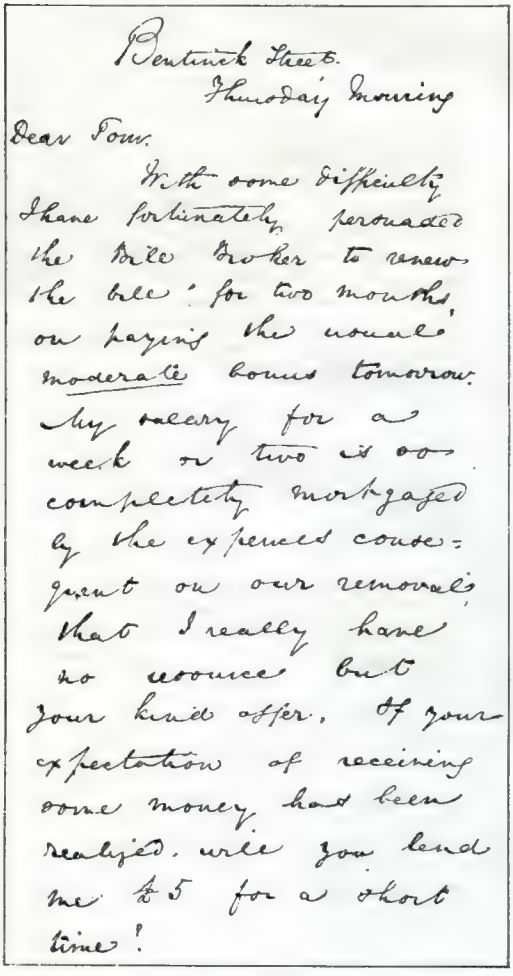
If any one were to ask me what in my opinion was the dullest and most stupid spot on the face of the Earth, I should decidedly say Chelmsford. Though only 29 miles from town, there is not a single shop where they sell Sunday Papers. I can't get an Athenæum, a Literary Gazette—no not even a penny Magazine, and here I am on a wet Sunday looking out of a damned large bow window at the rain as it falls into the puddles opposite; wondering when it will be dinner time, and cursing my folly in having put no books into my Portmanteau. The only book I have seen here is one which lies upon the sofa. It is entitled "Field Exercises and Evolutions of the Army, by Sir Henry Torrens." I have read it through so often, that I am sure I could drill a hundred recruits from memory. There is not even anything to look at in the place, except two immense prisons, large enough to hold all the Inhabitants

From a Photograph by T. W. Tyrrell.

18, *Bentinck Street, London, where Dickens was living with his parents at the time of his coming of age.*

of the country—whom they can have been built for I can't imagine.

This letter is full of anticipations of Pickwickian delights. The banners and the drums are those of Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, and the Hon. Samuel Slumkey; the horse is Mr. Winkle's, and that imprisonment by the weather in an inn is exactly what Mr. Pickwick suffered in Birmingham in company with Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen after his depressing interview with Mr. Winkle, senior, save that they had not even Sir Henry Torrens to read, only the evening paper which was "read and re-read with an intensity of interest only known in cases of extreme destitution."



Bentinck Street.
Thursday Morning

Dear Tom.

With some difficulty I have fortunately persuaded the Bill Broker to renew the bill for two months on paying the usual moderate bonus tomorrow. My salary for a week or two is so completely mortgaged by the expences consequent on our removal, that I really have no resource but your kind offer. Of your expectation of receiving some money, had been realized, will you lend me £5 for a short time!

Part of a letter written by Dickens, in 1834, in which he asks his friend Beard for a loan of five pounds.

These exhausting and enjoyable adventures were soon to end, for with the next year, 1836, we come to "Pickwick" and that tremendous popularity which sprang up like Jack's beanstalk. It was in February of that year that Mr. Hall, of Chapman and Hall, knocked at Dickens's door in Furnival's Inn and proposed to him the book in serial numbers that was to be "Pickwick." On March 31 the first number appeared, and on April 2nd he was married to Catherine Hogarth. With the fifth number in August Sam Weller made his appearance, to send the sales soaring up and to make his creator famous once and for all. With the last parliamentary session of the year Dickens left the Gallery for ever. His letters do not tell us much of this most exciting and momentous year. There is one in which he says as a postscript: "I want a walk: we can have a stroll on Monday if you are not engaged. The top of the Monument is one of my longings: the ditto of Saint Paul's another." There is nothing in the letter itself except an allusion which has some historical interest.

"Perhaps," he writes, "if you should be coming into town on that day you will have no objection to enquire for me at Bentley's at about quarter to twelve—I send you herewith the forthcoming Miscellany with my glance at the new Poor Law Bill."

Bentley was a publisher and had instantly seen that in this new author there was to be gained a prize of the first magnitude. He made a bid for him and got him. Dickens, in the first flush of triumph and with an exuberant confidence in his strength and power of invention, undertook more than mortal man could do. He agreed to edit the Miscellany, mentioned in the letter, for Bentley; to supply a story for it, which he did in the shape of "Oliver Twist," and two more stories into the bargain. This, too, while he was contracted to Chapman and Hall for yet another story, destined to be "Nicholas Nickleby."

It became apparent later that such a bargain as that with Bentley must be revised. Dickens felt bitterly that he was working himself to death for the benefit of others and declined to go on. In the end he bought back the copyright of "Oliver Twist" from Bentley, while the contract for "Barnaby Rudge" and the third story were cancelled.

With 1837 we may be said to start on a new era in which Dickens is an established literary personage. Among the letters in this year is an invitation to the christening of his eldest child,

Charles Culliford Boz Dickens, born on January 6th, to whom Beard was godfather. The letter is written from Doughty Street, whither Dickens and his wife had now moved from Furnival's Inn.

My dear Beard,

We christen the living wonder on Saturday at 12, at New Pancridge, and shall expect you here at half past 11.

We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you and your sisters to meet a few friends in the evening, or shall be much disappointed.

Always your most faithfully
CHARLES DICKENS.

This was a happy event; but another letter refers to a sad one, the death in May of his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, which so prostrated Dickens with grief that for two months there was no number of "Pickwick" published, and he moved for change and rest to a farm at Hampstead.

Collins's Farm,
North End,
Hampstead
Wednesday Evening
May 17th, 1837

My dear Beard

I received your kind letter in due course. I should have written to you myself to communicate the dreadful occurrence, but I had so many distressing appeals to my attention and exertions, that I was compelled to postpone doing so for a time.

I presume you heard from my father, that on the Saturday Night we had been to the Theatre—that we returned home as usual—that poor Mary was in the same health and spirits in which you have so often seen her—that almost immediately after she went upstairs to bed she was taken ill—and that next day she died. Thank God she died in my arms, and the very last words she whispered were of me.

Of our sufferings at the time, and all through the dreary week that ensued, I will say nothing—no one can imagine what they were. You have seen a good deal of her, and can feel for us, and imagine what a blank she has left behind. The first burst of my grief has passed, and I can think and speak of her calmly and dispassionately. I solemnly believe that so perfect a creature never breathed. I knew her inmost heart, and her real worth and value. She had not a fault.

Mrs. Hogarth has suffered and still continues to suffer most deep and bitter anguish. Kate, I am glad to say, made such strong efforts to console her, that she unconsciously summoned up all her fortitude at the same time, and brought it to her own assistance. She knows that if ever a mortal went to Heaven, her sister is there; she has nothing to remember but a long course of affection and attachment, perhaps never exceeded. Not one cross word or angry look on either side, even as children, rises in judgment against her: and she is now so calm and cheerful that I wonder to see her.

I have been so shaken and unnerved by the loss of one whom I so dearly loved that I have been compelled to lay aside all thoughts of my usual monthly work, for once, and we have come here for quiet and change. We have a cottage of our own with large gardens, and everything else on a small but comfortable scale. Kate is very anxious indeed to see you, and as I can assure you that you will derive anything but pain from seeing her, I hope you will join us in

The old House of Commons, showing in the background the Reporters' Gallery where Dickens and Thomas Beard worked together.

Photo: T. W. Tyrrell.

Collins's Farm, Hampstead, to which Dickens removed in 1837 to recover from the shock he suffered at the death of his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth.

the old way. Name your own time, and believe me that there is no one whom it would give us so much pleasure to welcome as yourself.

A week earlier had come a short letter from Dickens's father, full of genuine sorrow and conceived in a style in which it is not, I hope, unkind to trace something of that solemnity of language which belonged to Mr. Micawber.

Dickens wrote the Epitaph for Mary Hogarth's grave, which was greatly admired by Leigh Hunt: "Young, beautiful and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen."

During the next two years Dickens's fame steadily increased and he worked prodigiously. While "Pickwick" was still running its course "Oliver Twist" had begun to appear in *Bentley's Miscellany*. Before "Oliver Twist" was finished the first number of "Nicholas Nickleby" had appeared in April, 1838. It ended in October, 1839, and this was celebrated by a dinner to which Beard was asked in a letter dated September 21st. The letter is further interesting as being the first from Broadstairs, which was to be afterwards Dickens's beloved holiday home. He had discovered it some two years before.

Then follows another letter from Broadstairs, written in tearing spirits and with a delightful expectation of conviviality and friendliness.

37, Albion Street,
Broadstairs.
June 1st, 1840.

My dear Beard,

With that tremendous energy which characterises the proceedings of this establishment, we thought of coming here one day last week, and accordingly came this very morning. We have been in the house two hours, and the dining-parlour closet already displays a good array of bottles, duly arranged by the writer hereof — the spirits labelled "Gin," "Brandy," "Hollands" in autograph character—and the wine tasted and approved. The castors already boast mushroom ketchup, Harvey, cayenne and such like condiments; the writing table is set forth with a neatness peculiar to your estimable friend; and the furniture in all the rooms has been entirely rearranged by the same extraordinary character. The sea is rolling away, like nothing but the sea, in front of the house, and there are two pretty spare bedrooms waiting to be occupied.

We mean to stay here a month, and to return, please God, for another month in the beginning of September.

The steamship "Britannia," in which Dickens sailed, in 1842, on his first voyage to America.

For occasional manly sports in July and August, I shall endeavour to find some queer cabin at Cobham in Kent.

Meantime verbum sap. Every Saturday morning at 9 o'clock there is a Ramsgate Steamer leaving London Bridge Wharf, which, being boarded off this place by a boat belonging to it, will deposit you in the family's arms. On Monday mornings you can leave here either at 8 or 9, and be in town as you please at about ½ past 3 or ½ past 4.

Therefore, as I am very tired and just now going to bed preparatory to close work tomorrow, I hereby forward you these instructions, expecting by return of post a becoming assurance of your duty and submission.

My Dear Beard,
Heartily Yours,
CHARLES DICKENS.

In 1841, Dickens writes to Beard to tell him that he has had an operation. As to what it was Forster gives no hint, speaking merely of his "grave illness."

You will hardly believe it I dare say, for I can't but I have been very ill for a week, and last Friday morning was obliged to submit to a cruel operation, and the cutting out, root and branch of a disease caused by working over much, which has been gathering, it seems, for years. Thank God it's all over and I am on the sofa again—rather lean, but filling the Doctor with boundless astonishment, notwithstanding.

If his illness was caused by overwork, as he said, it was small wonder, for since the last letter he had devised the rather cumbrous framework of "Master Humphrey's Clock," which, as far as we are now concerned, contained "The Old Curiosity Shop," and had also finished "Barnaby Rudge," which had been on the stocks for some while. Further, after more worry in bargaining with publishers, he had agreed to write "Martin Chuzzlewit." Before he did so, however, he had decided to go to America, to which he had received many cordial invitations. On January 3rd in 1842 he sailed on the Cunard steamer *Britannia* with his wife and a maid and landed in Boston on January 28th, after a terrible voyage of which the perils were very real and not merely those of a landsman's invention.

The following letter written on the first of May tells of that voyage. There is about it here and there a likeness to what he afterwards wrote in "American Notes." There could be no better example of the pages of brilliant writing that Dickens could, when he had a mind to it, lavish lightheartedly on his friends. Indeed, the letter is so nobly long that it must be split in

two and part of it kept for our next number.

Niagara Falls (Upon the *English* side)
First of May, Sunday—1842.

My dear Beard,

This letter will not be as old when it comes to you, as (observing this date) you will at first suppose it. I write it now: thinking it very probable that if I don't I may be again disappointed in my endeavours to find time for that purpose. But I shall be obliged, for steamboat purposes, to carry it on to Montreal: and before I post it, I will add a line or two with the latest intelligence of our health and spirits.

I dare say you have long ago set me down as a forgetful, unmindful, discourteous, unfriendly—not to say utterly profligate and abandoned villain. But we have been travelling so far and so constantly—have been, if I may be allowed the expression, such perfect Pashanger-Marjits—and have been moreover, so beset, waylaid, hustled, set upon, beaten about, trampled down, mashed, bruised, and pounded by crowds, that I never knew less of myself in all my life, or had less time for those confidential interviews with myself whereby I earn my bread, than in these United States of America. But all our journeyings by land and water: by coach and steamer: wagon, railway, prairie, lake and river, shall be yours anon: and I will not be tempted to take the edge off that hearty laughter we shall raise (please God) in number One, over its not despicable vintages, before we are many weeks older, by launching into present description. We have been into the Far West—into the Bush—the Forest—the log cabin—the swamp—the Black Hollow—and out upon the open Prairies. By the time we reach home, we shall have travelled ten thousand miles or more. I have a horrible fear that I shall return "a bore"—not to anticipate which dire consummation, I will only add, on this head, that we sail from New York, per George Washington Packet *Ship* (none of your steamers) on Tuesday the seventh of June. Hoo-ray—ay—ay—ay—ay—ay—ay!!!!!

In the next issue of THE STRAND MAGAZINE *will be published the continuation of this letter, which graphically describes the terrible experiences Charles Dickens suffered on his voyage across the Atlantic.*

THE GOLD MAKERS

I AM more shameless than my colleagues about some things. I don't believe I know French better than most of them. But I don't mind talking it at a great rate without too meticulous a regard for genders. So every now and then I take a perfectly good holiday by giving a course of lectures in alleged French in Paris. Everyone is pleased by this arrangement. My university feels it is doing something for international co-operation, I manage to tell my French colleagues some things they don't know, and I learn a number of things I don't know myself. The French remain beautifully oblivious to a lot of work done outside France until everyone says French science is going to the dogs. Then it turns out that some perfectly obscure French man or woman has just discovered something really original and unlikely, such as radioactivity, or wave mechanics, which makes Einstein seem as simple as Rule of Three, and incidentally landed Eugène Galois in Devil's Island, and me (I sincerely hope) in the local jail at Ambert.

I shouldn't have put in all this preface if I was publishing this narrative in the *Chemical Gazette* or the *British Journal of Physics*, as I originally thought of doing. But readers of this magazine might wonder what I was doing in the Rue Cujas at eleven p.m. on June 28th, 1930, and why the man with no front teeth should have known who I am, and that I actually understand something about the application of wave mechanics to chemistry. The streets round the Sorbonne are placarded with lecture announcements, and my portrait had appeared in *L'Illustration* with a highly misleading biography. On the date in question I had just delivered my sixth and last lecture, and subsequently consumed a considerable quantity of very light beer with some French colleagues at the Café Soufflet, which is at the corner of the Boulevard St. Michel and the Rue des Ecoles. I had sat there with my eminently respectable colleague, Henriot, and his wife, whilst one of his most brilliant pupils played backgammon at a neighbouring table with a little lady whose calling was not in doubt.

By

J. B. S. HALDANE

Illustrated by OAKDALE

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The shabbily-dressed man slunk on ahead of me and waited while I stood under a lamp and looked at the paper he had given me.

THE man with no front teeth was remarkably shabbily dressed, and looked hungry, which is unusual in Paris, where there is work for almost everybody to-day. He sidled up to me, and, in a voice which was not rendered more intelligible by the absence of his teeth, said, "For the love of Science read this, and if you want more, follow me." He slunk on ahead of me and waited in the shadow of a doorway while I stood under a lamp and looked at the paper he had given me. It was the first part of the wave equation for carbon, or, rather, of the set of forty-two simultaneous differential equations which would enable one to predict the behaviour of that element if one could solve them. But it was expressed in a notation new to me, and certainly unpublished. Now a beggar or a tout for some unsavoury concern might conceivably have copied out some of Kultchagin's equations to act as ground-bait for me, but he could not possibly have transposed them like that. Imagine a man handing you a copy of "The Shropshire Lad" translated faultlessly into Icelandic, and then written out in Egyptian hieroglyphics, and you get an idea of the intellectual effort involved and the special knowledge needed. This was something really queer, and I am a student of the really queer in physical chemistry, but do not despise it when I meet it elsewhere. I followed him. "Bar du Progrès, Porte de la Villette, minuit," he whispered. He was obviously in considerable terror, and motioned me to go on.

I had an hour before midnight. I felt that I might be in for something odd, and after making sure that I was not followed, I went into the Café d'Harcourt, and over a coffee wrote a note to my friend, Bertaux, giving him the facts and asking him to ring me up at my hotel at noon next day, and to inform the police if I were missing. Then I boarded the Metro for the Porte de la Villette, an exit from Paris which so far was only known to me by its proximity on the map to the municipal slaughterhouse. I was not as calm as I could have wished, for as I entered the train I found that I had just lit a threepenny cigar in oblivion of the fact that there are no smoking compartments on the Metro.

The Bar du Progrès is dim, but not really sinister. It is extremely like some thousands of other bars. There is the same fat lady behind the same zinc counter, the same surprising variety of bottles behind her, the same rather consumptive-looking waiter. At the back there is a table in a recess, with two chairs. One occupant of the table can be seen from the door. The other is screened. I went in just before midnight, ordered a *café cognac*, and sat down facing the door. The only other customer was an inoffensive-looking lorry-driver, who was describing in considerable detail a collision in which he had, of course, been the innocent party, but which had detained him beyond his usual bedtime. On the stroke of midnight my friend of the Rue Cujas came in and, without a word, sat down in the seat opposite me. I ordered him another *café cognac*, and repeated the latter at suitable intervals during the next hour. I observed that the missing teeth were only one effect of what must have been a thoroughly nasty wound in the face. But the scars were old; it looked like a war wound. He spoke in a low voice for the best part of an hour in rapid and not easily intelligible French. Occasionally, at critical places in the story, he put in certain key words in English. Once or twice he made a scientific point in German. He was obviously suffering from extreme terror, but it was not the terror of the raw recruit during his first heavy shelling. It was the much grimmer emotion of the old soldier who realizes that there is a definite limit to human endurance. This is roughly what he told me. I don't think my recollection contains any serious errors on matters of fact.

"You have heard what happened to Eugène Galois?"

"I know he was found guilty of murder and sent to Devil's Island. But I can't believe he murdered a colleague for money. He's as big a mathematician as his namesake was a century ago. He might have committed a *crime passionnel*. Anyone with guts might do that. But you can't murder for gain unless your mind is obsessed by money, and his mind was too full of loxodromic groups to leave room for that sort of obsession. I hear they're trying to get his case re-tried. If I can do anything in reason to help, I will."

"I'm glad you feel like that about Galois," said my neighbour, "but it's too late. He died last month of parrot disease. The convicts were allowed to keep pets, and there was an epidemic. He was a martyr. I am only talking to you because he is dead. He was on to the biggest thing since the invention of the steam engine. He was murdered because he knew too much. If you listen to me, you may make world history. You may quite possibly become the richest man on the planet. But you are also likely to be murdered. Indeed, if you have been seen with me you probably will be. But if you're afraid, you'd better clear out at once."

I don't mind admitting that I was afraid.

But since November 11th, 1918, my adventures had been intellectual and emotional only. Moreover, I am ambitious. I fell a victim to my really lamentable propensity for quotation, and reminded myself,

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all."

"Go on," I said. I also repeated under my breath a line from a less reputable poem which I had found consolatory on unpleasant occasions during the War, to the effect that, whatever happened, I should be "damnable mouldy a hundred years hence." He went on:—

"GALOIS was a man of genius. You know that. But you don't perhaps realize how broad his interests were. He felt very deeply that the evils of the present day were due to the application of science by unscientific men. 'We have given humanity a large degree of control over matter, and they have given us modern war and modern industry,' he used to say. So he determined to apply his science according to his own ideas, not those of financiers. He had a special down on financiers. He realized that wave mechanics meant a new era in chemistry. When he heard that Eucken and Borhöfer had proved hydrogen to be a mixture, he said it was only the beginning. He had some private means, and after his last published paper he went off to the country, and worked out the wave equations for the gold atom. You will realize the stupendous nature of that. A man with the mathematical ability to do it could have determined the orbit of the new planet Pluto in one evening in a *café* with the band playing. He bought a cottage in the country and had the walls papered white. He went round the different rooms with a step-ladder, covering the paper with calculations. Of course, he filled masses of note-books, too. But he said he needed the walls for the main results, and by writing them up in that way he knew how to find what he wanted. He worked eight hours a day for a year and a half, and at the end of that time he had his principal results in a single note-book. I have seen it, but you will soon hear why I haven't got it. In another half year he had worked out that gold must have an enormous and quite unsuspected affinity for a certain group of organic compounds. Then he got hold of Riquier, an organic chemist, who had been with him at the Ecole Normale, and Riquier made one of the compounds in question. They showed that their scheme would work on a laboratory scale. Then they approached me.

"My name is Martin. That is irrelevant. I do not think that I shall live long. I was a works chemist at Nanterre, and a friend of Riquier's. We went down together to Ste. Leocadie, a little village on the sea coast, in Bouches du Rhône, near Aigues Mortes, where there is a large lagoon. We started a salt-pan. I don't know that the salt was particularly good, but we managed to sell it, anyway. That, however, wasn't what we were after. You know there is gold in sea water. Not very much, about one part in twenty million. When you evaporate the water in a salt-pan, most of the salt crystallizes out, and you are left with a sticky solution full of Epsom salts and whatnot. Almost all the gold is in there, so it is easy to concentrate it a hundred times in the sunlight of southern France. You can crystallize most of the rest of the salts without losing much gold. The brine left behind has one part in four hundred thousand of gold. That's a lot. Gravel with only one part in a million has been worked profitably, and even on the Rand the quartz only averages twelve parts in a million of gold. You take your residual solution and add about eight parts in a million of Riquier's compound, which we called auron. I don't know what it is, but it is bright blue, and it is made from saponine, and I believe has two pyrrole rings in its molecule. You leave the mixture for an hour, and then bubble air through it. The blue stuff has combined with the gold to make a red compound. This is a surface active stuff, and it all comes into the froth which you blow off the top. You dry the froth, add a little acid, and out comes the gold. You can use the blue stuff again, but we used to lose about five per cent. at each operation.

"My job was to run the bubbling tanks. Riquier made the stuff, and Galois saw to sales and purchases. There were some local men, chosen for their stupidity, who looked after the salt-pans, and I acted as foreman there. We started in January, 1929, but it wasn't till May that we got the process working perfectly, and from May to September we got out about four million francs' worth of gold, thirty thousand pounds, or a little more. Most of that went in paying off our debts, but we had a million or so of clear profit. Of course, before the show started we had decided what to do with the money. We were all somewhat idealistic. You have to be idealistic to go in for science in France to-day, when a professor gets three hundred pounds a year or so as the reward of a distinguished career. Our immediate idea was to go straight ahead

until we had a thousand million francs, and then to start endowing science as it ought to be endowed, so that a good scientific worker was paid as well as a good engineer or surgeon, and a reasonable amount was available for apparatus. Naturally, we thought most of France, Belgium, and Italy, where scientific workers are worst paid. But we hadn't forgot Germany, and we had a few schemes even for England and America. Well, that's all over! If you succeed where we failed, don't forget French science."

I'm not likely to," I said.

"We reckoned to make some hundred millions of francs without exciting much notice, but obviously the thing couldn't go on indefinitely. But here Galois had his plans. He believed that the world was not producing gold quickly enough. If humanity increases its stock of gold more slowly than its other material wealth, prices will fall and you will get unemployment. That is what is happening now. If we made gold too quickly, say, ten thousand million francs a year, prices would rise, and all the world would be like France and Germany after the War. Galois's idea was to produce gold just fast enough to keep prices steady on an average. 'The thing will be too big for any one man,' said Galois, 'and if I gave it to the French Government the country would be flooded with gold, and our agriculture and manufacturers will die as those of Spain did after the conquest

of Mexico and Peru. No, we'll give France enough to pay her foreign debts, but the secret and the control of the thing must go to the League of Nations, and the day they get it America and the Soviets will join up.'

" Well, everything went swimmingly till the end of last August. Then I got a typewritten document from Paris. There was no address, but it was headed, ' Association Internationale pour la Défense des Interêts Rentiers.' It ran roughly like this :—

" ' *Dear Sir,—*

' *As it is possible that in future the operations on which you are engaged will incommode us, I have the honour to offer you an income of two hundred thousand francs per year should you abandon them. Your colleagues have also been approached. In the event of your resigning your occupation, you will receive your first quarter's salary within one week, the notes being dispatched to your mother's house. In earnest of our good intentions we enclose ten thousand francs.*

' *Should the offer not be accepted within one week from to-day, we shall be compelled to take steps to eliminate the concern in which you are a partner.*

' A.I.D.I.R.'

" I was impressed by the ten thousand francs, but still more by the fact that when I looked at the letter three days later the paper had crumbled to powder. As a chemist I can imagine how this might be done, but it would take some working out. For that showed that our enemies had skill and knowledge behind them as well as

The bomb burst as I fell flat on the ground. The man with the revolver jumped from the car, but the driver could not escape, and the explosion lifted him into the air.

money. The fact that they had destroyed this evidence meant that there was probably something in their threats.

" I talked it over with my colleagues. They had had similar letters. Unfortunately, they were against warning the police, as they didn't want to give away what we were doing. Galois thought the A.I.D.I.R. might be what it purported to be, a representative of a financial group interested in fixed interest-bearing securities, which would, of course, fall in value if we flooded the world with gold, while ordinary shares and equities would rise. Riquier and I, rightly as it turned out, believed that they really stood for a gold-mining group.

" I never found out how they discovered our secret. Galois and I used to take our gold by cart to a bank at Cette. Someone connected with that may have got suspicious, and tracked us. Possibly Riquier may have talked too much to a lady—but I doubt it.

" Next week I was rung up on the telephone. The voice said, ' A.I.D.I.R. speaking. Our offer is and remains open. We are even prepared to raise it if you state your terms in the advertisement column of the *Petit Nimois*. If you do not accept, you will all be killed. This is our last communication.'

" I found later that the call had been made at a public call office in Nimes. We agreed to take no notice, but started a scheme of defences. We all had automatic pistols, and Riquier a supply of lachrymatory gas bombs. The factory was easily defensible, and we had burglar alarms, and a couple of fairly excitable dogs. The other two were enthusiasts, and I am not much afraid of death. As you see, my face got smashed up in the War."

He lifted his rather long and dirty hair, and I noticed that, besides the damage to his mouth, he had no left ear.

" At that time I had some false teeth, which I have just pawned in order to live. But I have been in constant pain since 1916, so I do not find life immensely attractive, even when I am not being hunted.

' Towards the end of September I developed a boil on my neck, and had to go into a clinic for two days to have it lanced. While I was away, the blow fell. Riquier was found shot outside the factory door. Two Swiss tourists swore that they had seen Galois shoot him after a quarrel. The bullets fitted a pistol which a Marseilles gunsmith swore Galois had bought from him, and which was found near the body. Several other witnesses turned up later, and swore to the most incredible lies, which hung together to make a pretty damning story. Almost simultaneously an alleged Chilian millionaire called Fernandez sued Galois for six million francs which he claimed to have lent him for a scheme for extracting gold from sea-water. Apparently he had a large outfit of forged documents. As you know, the jury found that Galois was a swindler and a murderer. I got hold of his lawyer, and offered to give evidence, but he thought it would be useless, and I lay low. But the A.I.D.I.R. people found me. As I was coming home one night I was attacked by three men. I didn't want to shoot and get jailed, as I probably would have been. I managed to burst a lachrymatory bomb among them, and left them weeping. But I have been on the run ever since. Meanwhile, Fernandez was able to seize the factory for debt, and presumably got our documents and about a kilogram of auron.

" Even after his condemnation, Galois's lawyer believed in him. He found out some odd facts. He established that both Fernandez and one of the supposed Swiss were connected with the same gold-mining group."

THAT was the end of our conversation, because at this point I noticed a bomb coming towards me through the air. Up till that moment I had refused to decide between two alternatives—that M. Martin's story was true or that he was a very good liar. I had a strong suspicion that he would shortly ask me to lend him a hundred francs. I felt that I had had my money's worth, and proposed to lend him a hundred and fifty, for good lying is a rare gift which should be encouraged.

The bomb, however, convinced me that he had been speaking the truth. But its immediate effect was to jerk me back for thirteen years into the past. It was very unfortunate indeed for the throwers of this bomb that hand grenades had been my special line during the Great War. I am one of the few people who ran a bombing school for nine months without casualties. Among the things which we occasionally did as demonstrations was to catch lighted bombs and throw them back, or, more accurately, sideways, out of the trench. I had a one-eyed and rarely quite sober sergeant who used to do this, but I sometimes did it myself. I admit that we used to lengthen the time-fuse beforehand. Provided you are a good judge of time, it is no more dangerous than crossing the road among motor traffic, but it is more impressive to onlookers.

This bomb was a " stick bomb " with a long wooden handle. I think it was a German type with a five seconds' time fuse. Looking past the bomb through the door

of the *café*, I saw two men in a car, one at the wheel and one who had clearly just thrown it. The car was moving slowly. I reckoned that the charge would explode in another three seconds. As the bomb, which was thrown with a very good aim, landed in my coffee cup, I caught it by the handle, and ran towards the door, swinging it as I did so. The man standing in the car was expecting me to run out, so he fired at me. But he was not expecting me to return the bomb, so he fired very erratically. One bullet went through my raincoat. Another, as I afterwards learnt, hit the lady behind the counter, but not fatally. As I reached the door, I pitched the bomb neatly into the car, which was now accelerating, and threw myself flat on my face with more speed than elegance, as I had been accustomed to do when a machine-gun opened fire on me.

The bomb burst as I reached the ground. The man with the revolver was jumping from the car as it did so. A piece wounded him, and he fell on the pavement. The driver could not escape, and the explosion lifted him into the air. His body, oddly twisted, fell back into the car as it struck a lamp-post and burst into flames. I got up and ran past the blazing car. As I passed the man on the pavement, I kicked his head as hard as I could. Some bone in it broke with a crack. I ran my fastest down a side street, dodged round several corners, and was violently sick. The burning car lit up the sky behind me as I walked with deliberate slowness on to the Rue de Flandres. I saw no sign of Martin, and nobody followed me. I was fortunate enough to catch, within a very few minutes, an omnibus going to the Châtelet, one of those which run at hourly intervals throughout the night. I got off just before the terminus, and walked to my hotel by a roundabout route.

I am fairly sure that I was not followed, for on several occasions I turned corners when no one was in sight. I reflected for a short time on my adventures, and on the fact that I had not paid for the coffee. I regretted this, for I am rather scrupulous in small matters. I also hoped that I had killed the man on the pavement, or at least given him severe enough concussion to blot out his memory of recent events. In that case there would probably be no one who had seen me with Martin, and I stood a chance of becoming the modern equivalent of Midas. Meanwhile, however, there was nothing to be done, and rather unexpectedly I fell asleep within half an hour.

I did not wake up next morning until about ten. I came to the conclusion that I had better clear out for England at once. As soon as I had dressed I telephoned to Bertaux that I was all right, but had to leave Paris. I told him to keep his mouth shut, and to lunch with me at one o'clock. I then took a bus to my bank in the Place de la Concorde, and drew out two thousand francs for my hotel bill and railway ticket. There had been no account of last night's little affair in the morning paper, but when I left the bank I bought a *Paris-Midi*, which devoted a column to the outrage of the Bar du Progrès. The man in the car was dead, although a baker had burned his hands badly in an attempt to rescue him. Another man, presumably the one with the revolver, was in hospital with a wound in the shoulder and a fractured jaw. So was the proprietress. The waiter had seen me throwing a bomb, but apparently no one had seen the bomb coming in. Fortunately he gave a very vague description of me, and had overheard Martin and me talking in German, but not in English. He also said that I spoke French with a German accent, in which he was not so far out. Being a Scotsman, I do not talk it with an English accent.

I WENT to the Gare du Nord for a ticket, and for a reservation on the four o'clock train. As I left the station I noticed a man with a black moustache in a bowler hat looking at me rather intently. I got into a taxi and ordered the driver to go to the restaurant where Bertaux was expecting me. I gave the directions in a fairly low voice, so I hardly think the watcher could have overheard me. He got into another taxi, and I noticed it following us. I did not wish to involve Bertaux in my little troubles. I also wanted to be perfectly sure that I was being followed, and, if possible, to shake the man off. So instead of going to my restaurant near the Sorbonne, I told the driver to go to the Gare du Luxembourg.

I can just remember the time when the London Metropolitan was worked by steam engines. Those of my readers who regret those romantic days are advised to travel by the Chemin de Fer de Sceaux et Limours, a suburban railway line which starts from the Gare du Luxembourg and leaves Paris by an extremely long tunnel which is always full of a particularly suffocating smoke. I bought a ticket for Massy-Verrières, an undistinguished station on that undistinguished line. My pursuer followed me. I went down and got into the fullest compartment I could find. He got in close behind me. At the first stop, the Gare de Pont Royal, still in Paris, I dashed out through the smoke and up the stairs. My unknown friend followed. But here I had a stroke

of luck. Just outside the station there was one—and only one—taxi. I boarded it and told the man to go to the Institut Pasteur. I crouched to offer as small a target as possible if my unknown friend opened fire. Fortunately he did not. As we turned the first corner I looked back and saw him running after me. I do not know when he finally lost sight of me, but, as I went down to the Metro station in the Boulevard Pasteur, to which I had diverted my vehicle, I saw a taxi driving up at a rather dangerous speed. Four different lines, however, leave that station, and if he was still chasing me, he must have taken the wrong train.

AFTER several changes on the Metro, I arrived rather late at my restaurant. Bertaux was waiting, but had nearly finished lunch. I told him I was being followed by would-be murderers, and was going to run for it. As I refused to take his advice and go to the police, I think that he suspected my pursuer of being an irate husband. That is the worst of these romantics. I had no intention of going back to my hotel, for if my identity was known it might be watched. I asked Bertaux to go for a small suitcase which I had already packed with my more essential clothes and shaving things. He was to say I would call round for my trunk later. I had just finished lunch when he came back. I determined to run in the opposite direction from England, in the hope that my enemies were only watching the west-bound trains, so I went straight to the Gare de l'Est and bought a ticket for Berne, hoping to work round from there to one of the German air ports and fly home.

Even as I bought my ticket I noticed, or seemed to notice, a man who looked at me closely and then went to a telephone-box. I did not see him again after this, and my journey was uneventful as far as Belfort. But in the *Soir*, which I had bought, I found two interesting items. The man with the broken jaw had given his name. It was presumably false, but this meant that he could speak. On the same page was a not uncommon headline, "Un Inconnu Se Suicide"—"Suicide of Unknown Man." The man in question, who had been found hanged from the scaffolding of a suburban cinema under construction, had no left ear, and his front teeth were missing. Nothing was found on his person but a crude scrawl stating that he was fed up. So they had got Martin. Possibly they had forced my name out of him before his murder.

It was night when I got to Belfort. As the train ran into the station I saw on the platform my friend who had chased me earlier in the day, with two other men. Presumably he at least had flown to Belfort.

I may well have done him an injustice, but the events of the past twenty hours had somewhat prejudiced me against him, and, although I was not certain whether he intended to murder me or merely to hand me over to the police on a charge of bombing his friends, I did not feel called upon to put his intentions to an experimental test. I am sure he had not seen me when I rapidly left the compartment and, before the train had drawn up, bolted myself into a lavatory, where I remained. I had taken my hand-bag, as there was still a chance that my name was not known to my hunters.

Five minutes after leaving Belfort I had some luck. If I had not, I should not be alive and writing this account. The train drew up, as I had hoped it would, and clearly not in a station, as there were no lights. I dashed out of my retreat, opened a door, and jumped out of the train on the left-hand side. As I did so, the train began to move. Someone fired two or three shots at me. Presumably they missed because the train was moving and I was already fifteen yards away. Then a train going towards Paris, for which we had no doubt been waiting, cut in between me and the gunman. I did not stop running, and soon reached a road, where my luck still held. A lorry was waiting at a level crossing for the trains to pass. I asked for, and got, a lift. It appeared that the lorry was going from Strasbourg to Lons le Saunier with the household effects of a sub-prefect. For a hundred francs the driver was willing to take me to Besançon, where he was stopping for the night. I suspected that I might be chased, so I took him into my confidence, or, more accurately, half-way in. Having received a sound classical education, I remembered Odysseus, and the advantage of economy of truth when in tight corners. I judged the driver to be romantic in the worst sense of the word. Sailors, it is said, have a wife in every port, but ports are confined to sea coasts and large rivers and canals, whereas lorries can visit any town in a civilized country. Lorry drivers of a polygamous disposition are therefore peculiarly favoured by their duties.

I therefore informed him that I had formed a romantic attachment for the idol of a millionaire, and persuaded her to flee to Switzerland. The irate lover had pursued me while I was attempting to join her, and had tried to have me murdered in the train. As it was likely that he, or one of his myrmidons, would chase me in a car, I desired to hide among the furniture of the sub-prefect. Another fifty francs secured me a place on the top of a bale of carpets

As I jumped from the train it began to move again, and someone fired two or three shots at me.

under a table, the tarpaulin was drawn over me, and we started off. I had sufficient experience of lorry-jumping in the Great War to guess that I had not chosen a bed of roses. By bracing my arms and legs against the table-top I managed on the whole to avoid hitting the underside of the table when the lorry kicked its tail into the air, but the strain was considerable, and I was already aching, and had hit the table once, when, after ten minutes, the lorry stopped with a jarring of the brakes and an explosion of language.

The French tongue is peculiarly ill adapted for abuse. Theological invective is useless among a nation who are now mostly rationalists, and even in their religious days had a sneaking regard for the devil. And the various other expressions which horrify the Anglo-Saxon do not shock the Latin. So the special vocabulary of abuse is largely confined to the monosyllable which Marshal Cambronne used at Waterloo. This word circulated freely while my saviour denied having seen me, much less given me a lift. He even applied it to an offer of

fifty francs to look under the tarpaulin. He also mentioned the police. I heard the voices of two other men in discussion, and drew out my only weapon, a large pen-knife, not so much in the hope of saving my life, as on the principle enunciated by Macbeth, that, "Whiles I see lives, the gashes do better upon them." I am a Scotsman, like Macbeth. I proposed to close with one of my assailants and aim at his jugular vein, for the bullets from a small-bore automatic pistol, though quite efficient killers, have little immediate stopping power. The discussion continued, the details being inaudible. Finally my saviour produced his last verbal card. 'Tristes individus," he began a sentence, but before he had finished it I heard the noise of a large car accelerating. They had thought better of it. After all, one cannot hold up all the recalcitrant lorry drivers of a Département at the pistol's point.

At this moment I made the bravest decision of my life. I refused an offer to come out from my hiding-place. The next two hours were the most unpleasant I have ever passed, and I have been through three intense bombardments and had one septic wound. When we arrived at Besançon I was black and blue all over, and bleeding in a number of places. As the lorry driver stood me a stiff cognac for which he insisted on paying, he informed me that the men in the car had passed him again on their way back to Belfort, and looked at him closely. So at least I had saved my life.

I was extremely tired as well as sore, but I lost no time about my next step. With their clearly efficient organization, I assumed that the A.I.D.I.R. would discover my identity in a day or so, if they did not know it already. I wrote to a friend in London (for obvious reasons I do not mention his name) to say that I desired the story to appear in the Press that I had disappeared suddenly from Paris, leaving my luggage behind. I also wrote a letter, dated from Munich, to my cousin Polly, better known as Meg o' Mayfair, the lady who meets a duchess a day in the gossip columns of a daily paper. I told her that I was feeling very run-down after my lectures, and had been so absent-minded as to leave most of my luggage in Paris. I was going off for a walking tour in the Böhmer Wald, and hoped to see her when I returned in a month or two. I did not feel that Polly would be able to avoid contributing the gist of this note to the news columns. Another letter from the same address to my Parisian landlady stated that I would return to call for my luggage and pay my bill, although I guessed that the A.I.D.I.R. would probably do both on my behalf. I enclosed these letters to a friend who was working at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, with an urgent request to post them, burn the covering letter, and keep his mouth shut.

I reckoned that although the A.I.D.I.R. would probably not take this too seriously, they would be bound to divert a little energy to Germany, and if they failed to find me within a fortnight or so, they might begin to transfer their energies across the frontier. Meanwhile I slept, although it was clear, from the state of the sheets, that the spot on which I laid my head had supported many boots in the past.

IN the grey dawn my chauffeur woke me. I suppressed a desire to see Goya's "Scenes of Cannibalism" in the local picture gallery, though this would have accorded well with my mood, and continued my journey. I again refused to sit outside, but this time I was packed more scientifically and rattled rather little. By request the lorry halted on a deserted part of the road near Poligny, about thirty miles on. I kept up my romance, and said that I proposed to walk to the Swiss frontier, and cross by the Col de St. Georges, a good day's walk up through the Jura. But my plans were different. I walked in the opposite direction, making for the centre of France by unfrequented roads.

As I walked I tried to consider my situation as a purely intellectual problem. The A.I.D.I.R. probably believe that Martin knew how to make auron, and has told me the secret. But, in any case, I know enough to make it worth their while to murder me. If the bomb had been thrown five minutes later I should be in a better position to judge whether they intend to flood the world with gold, or merely to suppress the secret and guard their profits. I suspect the latter, for they would not be likely to keep the secret for long. While they believe that by murdering me they can hush the thing up, they will try to do so. I am, therefore, taking what I think to be the safest, though not the noblest, course. I am publishing all I know on the subject of gold extraction from sea water. Until publication they will try to murder me. But I hope that my account will appear simultaneously in England and the United States in magazines which generally contain fiction. Many of their readers may suppose this story to be fiction. But if I am murdered, or imprisoned on a false charge, like Galois, this will constitute an advertisement to the whole world that I have written the truth.

Even the A.I.D.I.R. cannot comb out the whole of France for me, though they may possibly put the French police on my track. But they are doubtless watching the French frontiers, the British ports, and my univer-

sity. They may even contrive to open letters to my friends, but they will hardly suspect me of publishing the most practically important discovery of the century in popular magazines. I am writing this manuscript in a little walled town in Auvergne, where I arrived a week after the rather hectic day which I have here chronicled. On the way I have done my best to sink my identity. I have removed all names and marks from my clothes, burnt my passport, and exchanged my suitcase for a knapsack. I have even gone so far as to remove the buttons from my clothes, and substitute French buttons. Sewing is not one of my accomplishments, and not only did I prick my fingers, but several of my buttons are insecure. My beard is growing nicely. In fact, I think of wearing one permanently in future. Also, I got ten francs for my razor. In Clermont-Ferrand I bought a French-Danish dictionary. As soon as the manuscript is accepted for publication, I am asking the firm who will act as my agents to put an advertisement in the *Petit Parisien* on three consecutive days, giving the date when the news will be published. The advertisement will be a request to the creditors of a mythical American, lately deceased, to write to a lawyer (also, I hope, mythical) in Baltimore, before a certain date. I, and I alone, shall know that that date is the date of publication, and until then I must conceal my identity. I shall wander about France as long as my money lasts, and even try to earn a little more. I got five francs yesterday for assisting a motorist, whose engine had broken down, to carry a suitcase to the nearest village. I dare not write to England for money, as this would give my address away if letters to my acquaintances are opened. Also, it might be difficult to get a letter without producing evidence of my identity.

I am living as cheaply as I can, but my expenses are much increased by the law of the land. In England anyone may sleep in the open, provided he has a shilling on his person to rebut the charge of being without visible means of support. But in France, to quote Anatole France from memory: "The law with majestic impartiality forbids the rich, no less than the poor, to sleep in ditches or under haystacks." That is the worst of Equality. Unless I can get a job, my money will run out in a month at most. Shortly before it is all spent, I propose to seek the shelter of the only available free lodging—namely, prison. I may, of course, be run in anywhere for having no identity papers, but my plan is to go to Ambert, get rather drunk, and be arrested. I shall then say that I am a native of Iceland, and have lost my passport. The local Danish vice-consul will presumably appear. I worked for three months in Copenhagen at the Institute of Theoretical Physics, and know enough Danish to be fairly rude. Besides, I am spending two hours a day with my dictionary. So I am going to be Mr. Thorgrim Magnussen, an ardent Icelandic home-ruler, who objects to all Danish officials as representatives of a foreign domination. I hope that I shall be so unpleasant that the Danes will refuse to accept me, and the French will keep me in jail. I do not particularly relish the idea of hard labour in a French prison, but it is preferable to the fate of Galois, Riquier, and Martin.

THE moment my story is published, I appeal to my friends and relations to take all possible steps to get me released. I shall also give my real name. But if no prisoner of the name of Thorgrim Magnussen is to be found in the jails of Auvergne, it may be presumed that I have met the fate of Martin. Only yesterday I saw an individual who appeared to be following me. I went up the nearest hill and outdistanced him. But I cannot believe that the A.I.D.I.R. have agents everywhere, and I suspect he was merely struck by my rather unkempt appearance.

What will happen after this story is published I do not know. I do not propose to emulate Galois and shall not try to make gold. I will not even take holidays at the seaside. Obviously if I knew the formula for auron and intended to work the process, I should not have given away half the secret. I shall certainly be watched, but I credit the A.I.D.I.R. with sufficient intelligence not to assassinate me. They will hope that this story will be taken as the ingenious attempt of a professor to explain his otherwise discreditable arrest for drunkenness. I take it, however, that someone will have the wits to see that it is a perfectly true story, and that Galois's process will be working somewhere within the next ten years. I hope so, because I should like to see the men who organized the murder of Galois and his friends picking crusts out of the gutter. A team of fairly good mathematicians could do the requisite calculations in four years or so. So about six years hence I recommend my readers to sell out shares in gold-mines and fixed interest-bearing securities, and to buy industrials. But there are some very good mathematicical physicists in Russia, and if the Bolsheviks get hold of the process first, there will be about a thousand million pounds per year available for the purposes of the world revolution. In that case the purchase of securities of any kind will be pointless.

THE RAILWAY CARRIAGE

By F. TENNYSON JESSE

SOLANGE FONTAINE nearly missed the train that Monday morning. She had been staying at Merchester for the week-end, with that old Colonel Evelyn, whose son she had been the means of saving from the gallows, and the old gentleman had kept on talking, with the pathetic garrulity of age, till the cab-driver had warned her that there was a bare five minutes to get to the station. Luckily, Solange had only a small suitcase, and she ran across the platform to the nearest carriage, wrenched open the door, and jumped in as the cabman flung the case in after her. She handed him his half-crown through the window as the train began to move.

At first, Solange, like anyone who has ever just caught a train at the last moment, leaned back, breathed thankfully, and took no notice of her surroundings. Then, also like everyone else, she looked round with a little smile of self-congratulation on her lips, ready to share with any strangers present that fraction of intimacy which such a happening strikes, like a spark, from one's fellow men.

It was a third-class carriage, with hard seats and varnished wooden doors. It's only other occupant was a woman who was sitting in the far corner. Apparently she had noticed neither Solange's abrupt entry nor her smile. She was an elderly woman, dressed in shabby black, she had no luggage, and she was sitting with her hands—the knotted veiny hands of a working woman—folded together in her lap. She was staring out of the window, and her lips were moving a little, as though she were talking to herself soundlessly.

Solange's smile died a natural death; she looked at herself in the little mirror from her handbag to make sure her hurry had not disturbed the set of her plain little helmet-hat. All was well; she was her usual clear, fine-drawn self, save for an unwonted flush on her pale cheeks, and one loose feather of fair hair that lay against her temple. She tucked it back and put the mirror in her bag again. Her cigarette-case caught her eye as she did so, she took it out, then hesitated, and glanced at the silent woman.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" asked Solange.

The woman drew her eyes away from their blind staring as though by a physical wrench, and looked at her. Something in that gaze struck unpleasantly on Solange's senses, but, as the woman did not seem to

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"Has something — been happening?" asked Solange, not liking to say, "Has there been an execution?"

have understood her, she repeated her question.

"Eh? Oh, naow. It don't make no matter."

The woman had a slight Cockney accent, but a surprisingly soft voice for one of her hard, almost wooden appearance. Solange thanked her and took out a cigarette, only to discover that she had no matches and that, as usual, her lighter wouldn't work. She glanced again at the woman, who had reverted to her occupation of staring out of the window. No good asking her for a light. She would just have to wait till someone else got in; the train was due to stop at the junction in another couple of minutes.

The platform was crowded, for it was market day at a neighbouring town, and it seemed that every farmer in the countryside was going in by this train. The carriage in which Solange was, however, being at the tail-end of the train, only one man came towards it and got in. He was a small, insignificant-looking man, with a big grey felt hat pulled right over his ears, and he carried a black bag.

He glanced sharply from Solange to the woman in black as he opened the carriage door and seemed satisfied by what he saw. Before he took his seat he stood for a moment, his bag in his hand, as though uncertain what to do with it. He glanced up at the rack, and even made a movement towards it, then sat down opposite Solange and stowed the bag away between his feet, under the seat. The whistle blew, the

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guard waved his flag, and the train started off again through the hot, summer country-side.

Solange took out a cigarette and leaned towards him with a smile.

" Will you be so kind as to let me have a match ? " she asked. The little man started. He, like the woman in black, seemed oddly abstracted. He stared at her, and then repeated : " A match ? Oh, yes." He also had an accent, but it was a North-country one, Solange noted. He almost said : " A match ? Oh, yez. . . ." Solange began to feel a little impatient. Was the world peopled by the half-dead this fine morning ?

He brought out his matchbox pretty smartly, however, and struck a light for her. His gallantry might be a little clumsy, but his movements were noticeably deft and economical, so much so that Solange was struck by the contrast between his stubby fingers and their neat precision of action.

Her cigarette alight, she leaned back, and the little man relapsed into a sort of surly abstraction. The elderly woman continued to stare out of the window at the bleached fields and the dark trees, and the rhythmic movements of the haymakers. The train gathered speed and roared and rattled through the lovely domestic landscape, a landscape with no touch of savagery or wild beauty, but which held in its contented folds the pastoral activities of men for generations past.

It was a run of ten minutes to the next stop—the village before the market town—after which the train would suddenly become converted into an express and pursue its quickened and uninterrupted way to London.

To Solange, in spite of the lovely country, and of the inoffensiveness of her fellow-travellers, that ten minutes seemed like one of those curious spaces when time, as we know it, ceases, and an endless period, like a breath held beyond human endurance, is the only measure. Why this should be so, she could not have told. She only knew that she would have given a great deal to be out of that little third-class carriage, to be in a modern corridor train, to be—this, above all—away from her travelling companions. Inoffensive. . . ? Obviously . . . then what was wrong—and when had it begun ?

The silent wooden woman had struck her with a sense of oddness, but not with any feeling of something definitely wrong. The commonplace little man, with his shaven cheeks and his deft, stubby fingers, had seemed unusual in a way that was not altogether good, but no message of evil such as had so often told her of harm, had knocked upon her senses when he entered the carriage. Yet it was only since he and the old woman had been in it together that she had felt this spiritual un-ease. Something was wrong between these two human beings—and yet they apparently did not know each other. Neither even knew that the other was in some queer way inimical, each was self-absorbed to the exclusion of the other, the woman in her strange daze of thought that was like a stupor, the man in some stony sort of regret. Sorry—that was the word for him, thought Solange, sorry but stubborn. He wasn't unhappy as the woman was unhappy, only ill at ease, as an animal is ill at ease when it is driven up the road to the slaughter-house.

SOLANGE was glad when the train drew up at a little wayside station. This time their carriage was invaded by four or five men, for the front of the train was already full. Solange felt a curious sense of relief at this influx of other human beings. At least she would not be penned in with the two strange, lost people who had sat silently on the seat opposite her, one at each end, for the last ten minutes. There was only another quarter of an hour to go before the market town was reached, and then, doubtless, everybody would get out and she would have the carriage to herself for the rest of the run to London.

A big red-faced farmer, with side-whiskers, sat beside Solange, and pulled out his pipe, glanced at her, and saw she was smoking herself. She smiled at him, and he grinned back and proceeded to light up.

" That's good, Missis," he said. " I don't like to get the ladies' hair full of smoke, but it's hard luck on a man not to have his pipe."

A thin, dried-up man, who was sitting opposite to the farmer, nodded several times as he proceeded to pack his own pipe with peculiarly evil-looking tobacco.

" That's so," he agreed. " I wonder if they let that poor young devil have a last smoke this morning."

" Sure they did," said the farmer, authoritatively, " they always let 'em do what they like. He could 'ave 'ad a bottle of champagne if he'd fancied it."

" No ! " said the other man, in admiring disbelief. " Is that so ? "

" That is so," asseverated the farmer.

" Well, now, I thought," said a third man, " that all they was allowed was an ordinary sort of breakfast—a good one, mind you, eggs and bacon, and anything like that."

" I heard they was given nothing but brandy in the way of a pick-me-up," said the thin man, rather encouraged by this contradiction of the farmer on the part of the third man.

"Can't you help us out?" Solange called. He shook his head.

"Anything they likes," repeated the farmer, stubbornly, "everyone knows that."

"Suppose they wanted poison, eh?" asked the thin man. "Something that would do it nice and quick without having to stand on the trap and have their necks broken. Don't tell me they'd give 'em poison."

The farmer was rather staggered by this novel suggestion. "Perhaps not poison," he said, "but champagne I don't doubt."

SOLANGE guessed of what they must be speaking. There must have been an execution that morning. She refrained from saying that bromide and four ounces of brandy was the official assuagement for the last agony. The execution must have been at Merchester, and it was not remarkable that she heard nothing of it, for she had been staying with Colonel Evelyn, and such subjects were never mentioned in his house since that dreadful night, which might have been young Charles Evelyn's last. That was why the servants had watched the old Colonel so anxiously and why the local paper had not been forthcoming. . . . The Colonel had been very childish since his son's narrow escape, and it was easy to delude him in little practical matters.

"I don't believe," said a fourth man, of the black-coat class, perhaps some lawyer's clerk travelling to his work at the market town, "that they ought ever to have hanged him. It was a cruel shame, that's what it was. After all, it was only circumstantial evidence."

"That's as good as any other evidence, and better," said the farmer, stoutly; "the only other evidence is what folks tells you they've seen, and we have it on the authority of the Bible that all men are liars. Give me circumstances every time, I says, they can't lie nearly as well as a man can."

"And a man can't lie near as well as a woman," said the clerk, with a little snigger.

"That's true enough," said both the other men in chorus.

It suddenly struck Solange as odd that only the newcomers were talking. The little man with the black bag and the woman in the corner were still silent.

"Well," said the farmer, "I met young Jackson once or twice, and he seemed to me a decent young fellow enough, not the sort of chap you'd expect to go and cut a man's throat behind his back, as you might say."

"He did it all right," said the clerk. "that's plain enough."

"They were both after the same woman, weren't they? And t'other man got her. You don't need to look much further than that. There's motive enough for you. Must ha' been fools."

"Come, now," said the farmer, "that's not very polite, with ladies present." He glanced at the silent woman in the corner, but she seemed to have heard nothing. She was no longer staring out of the window, her eyes were closed, and her hands were tightly folded together in her lap, and he looked away from her to Solange.

"I only came over from France on Friday," she said, "so I'm afraid I'm very ignorant. Has something—been happening?" She didn't like to say: "Has there been an execution?" so strongly were the memories of that dreadful morning in Merchester Jail implanted in her consciousness.

"Something happening!" said the farmer, "I should say so. Why, all Merchester has talked of nothing else for weeks and weeks. A young fellow called Jackson, Timothy Jackson, who served in Jordan's, the corn chandler's at Merchester, was walking out with a young woman who was already tokened a bit above her station—to a young lawyer. Smart fellow, young Ted Emery. My lawyer he was, at least his father's my lawyer," added the farmer, importantly, "and one night in a dark lane young Jackson has a row with him and cuts his throat. He was hanged this morning, young Jackson was, in Merchester Jail. People were pretty sorry round about. Tim Jackson was a good fellow, though he was a Londoner. Had to live in the country for his health. He was delicate-looking, white as a girl, but handsome enough if it hadn't been for one of them birthmarks on one cheek. Shaped like a bat's wing, it were, and my old missus allers said it fair gave her a turn to look at. But he was handsome, in spite of it, and this girl took a fancy to him. But he was no match for young Emery, who was one of those smart young fellows who think no end of themselves, and had a motor-bike and a sidecar to take his girl in and all that sort of thing. She was pretty bitter against Tim Jackson at the trial. If you ask me, she had only been amusing herself and would rather have got Emery than young Jackson. Now she's got neither, and serve her right, too."

"Aye, that's right enough," said the man opposite him.

Solange remembered having read something about the case in the Continental *Daily Mail* three weeks earlier. Only a short paragraph, for it had been an ordinary enough crime of jealousy. The judge had made some scathing remarks as to the method of the murder. It was "un-English" to cut a man's throat. It would have been more English, and consequently

better, if he had killed his adversary with a blow of a club, or his fist. Jackson, being a rather weedy town-product, had been unable to do this essentially English thing, and had resorted, in a moment of passion, to a razor. There had been a struggle, he hadn't crept up to the other man from behind, but undoubtedly in the course of the struggle he had cut his throat from behind, getting his arm round his neck and pulling the heavier man back towards him.

"I hear he confessed," said the clerk, importantly, "they were saying that at our Merchester office this morning, so I was told. It's my day at Winborough, you know, but they rang me up and told me just before I left home."

The whole carriage, still with the exception of the little man with the black bag and the elderly woman, was agog at this piece of news.

"Confessed, did he?" said the farmer. "Oh well, that'll put everybody's mind at rest. It's something to know justice has been done."

"Justice?" said the man opposite, bitterly. "Do you call it right to hang a decent young fellow because a woman had been driving him crazy? And if it comes to that, I'm not so keen on this capital punishment business. What right have we got to take life, I should like to know? I can tell you this, I'd sooner meet a young fellow like Timothy Jackson than meet the man who hanged him. There's a fellow I shouldn't like to shake by the hand. That's a dirty trade."

"Dirty enough," agreed the farmer, soberly.

The rhythm of the train began to slacken. Winborough was reached, and the carriage was emptied, but Solange saw, with a little feeling of dismay, that her original companions were continuing with her to London. She suddenly felt she couldn't bear this strange atmosphere of which she was conscious as surrounding them, and she got up to see if she couldn't change her carriage, but she had left it till too late. For the fourth time since the brief half-hour when she had jumped into the carriage at Merchester, she heard the guard blow his whistle, and the rhythm of the train began to beat upon her senses once more. Now there was no getting away from her strange, dumb companions for an hour and a half. She had to stay with them whether she would or no. It was really an outrage, she thought to herself, that such a thing as a non-corridor train should still exist. This wasn't even a very good train of the old-fashioned type. It ran very bumpily. Perhaps, thought Solange, all the rolling-stock on this line was very old. Then in a flash she realized that something had gone wrong. The train was bumping in a curious fashion, its rattle changed to a roar, a crashing sound broke through the rapidly accelerating conglomeration of other noises, and then the whole world seemed to go mad. The coach reared up, attacked the coach in front like a mad beast, rocked, lurched sideways, and at last came to a standstill, like a leaning tower, poised on its rear end. Solange and her two companions were spilled like rubbish from a shoot, against the door and windows at the bottom end, splintered glass all about them, and the black bag hit Solange full upon the temple.

* * * * *

WHY did this voice persist in waking her up? She didn't want to wake up, she only wanted to stay in this dark world where she felt numb and sleepy. She tried hard not to listen to the voice, but it went on and on. *Wake up, wake up, wake up* . . . . the words beat over and over upon her brain, would let her have no rest. Reluctantly at last she allowed her mind to pay attention. The voice sounded more clearly now, *Wake up, wake up, you must wake up.* The darkness of the world began to be shot with flashes and gleams of light even before she opened her eyes. *Wake up, wake up* . . .

She opened her eyes and slowly realized where she was and what had happened.

"You're all right," the voice went on, "but you must get out." The voice seemed to come from above her head, and rather surprised to find she could move, Solange looked up. She saw the head of a young man, dark against the blinding square of light made by the window of the carriage which was right up above her head. The young man looked down at her as though she were at the bottom of a well, and he were peering in over the rim. She stirred and felt herself cautiously. Yes . . . she was intact, she could waggle all her fingers and toes, her back was not broken, she could feel pain where a sharp angle of splintered coachwork stuck into one thigh. She looked about her, still dazed by the shock and her senses confused by the shouts and wails of terrified human beings that came to her ears. The elderly woman was either unconscious or dead, she was lying crumpled up, her eyes shut, and a thin skein of blood, where a splinter of glass had caught her, lying across her face like a ravelling of red worsted. The commonplace little man was doubled up, his head sunk sideways on his shoulder, his eyes closed and his face very pale. His hat had been knocked off, and Solange saw with a shock of irrational surprise, that, save where it was grey at the sides, his hair was a bright red. It was one of those

"I'll tak' it off, lass," said the little man, apologetically. "I didn't want you to see it, but there weren't no other way."

stupid and irrelevant details that strike the mind at such moments of stress.

Solange looked up. There was the face of the young man still peering in from the top of that strange well into which the railway carriage had become changed as though by magic.

"Can't you help us out?" she called.

He shook his head. She saw the dark weaving motion of it against the clear square blue of sky.

"You must wake him up," he called down to her. "Shake him, wake him up."

Solange managed to stagger to her feet, pushing aside bits of broken wood that hemmed her in. She looked doubtfully at the little man crumpled up at her feet. She hardly liked to shake him, and yet she couldn't climb up the tower that was the up-ended railway carriage without his help. She put her hand on to his shoulder and spoke urgently.

"Are you hurt? Oh, do try and do something. We've got to get out. We've got to get the old woman out. Wake up. Wake up," and she did actually begin to shake him, as one shakes someone who is having a bad dream. Slowly, the commonplace little light eyes opened and looked at her unintelligently. Then the man moaned a little, and put up one hand to his head.

"You're all right, you really are," said Solange, urgently. "Do see if you can climb up. There's someone up there who will help you if you only can." She glanced up and the young man above her met her gaze.

"Make him hurry up," he said, "there's a fire. Listen." And Solange, with a pang of pure fear that she never forgot, realized that the crackling sound which she had thought came entirely from breaking woodwork, was really made by the burning of the next coach, perhaps even by the burning of one end of the coach she was in.

"There was petrol in the van," said the young man, "and the guard was smoking."

The little red-haired man now began to feel himself all over, as Solange herself had done.

"I'm a'reet, Miss," he said, a little unsteadily, "I'll climb oop and hold down my hand to you."

He looked round him and saw the woman

still lying crumpled up, unconscious, and a worried look came across his face. However, he wasted no words, and began laboriously by the aid of the splintered luggage rack to try and pull himself up to the gaping window above his head. Solange saw, to her disgust, that the young man had gone. She managed to climb on the wreck of the seat, and exerting all her force, gave the little man a leg-up. With a mighty effort he pulled himself through the jagged frame of glass above his head and levered himself out into the air. For one awful moment Solange thought that perhaps he, too, was going to desert her, but he wriggled himself round on the up-ended side of the carriage, and looking down at her, held a hand that was cut and bleeding down towards her.

"Get a grip o' that," he said.

"I can't," said Solange. "I can't leave the old woman. We must get her out somehow."

The head of the young man came back now, and she saw it behind red-head's shoulder.

"You want a rope," said the young man, "make a rope fast round her. Oh, hurry up."

Solange looked frantically round the shattered compartment. There was not so much as a luggage strap round the little man's black bag, and none round her suitcase. "Can't you get a rope?" she called up to the little man, "ask someone for a rope."

Then the red-headed man spoke, slightly hesitating, in spite of that dreadful crackling that was coming nearer and nearer.

"Ma bag, Miss," he said, "ma bag. Tha'll find a rope there."

Solange seized the little black bag, and struggled with the lock.

"Don't pull it," called the little man, "slide it. That's reet."

The bag gaped open, and Solange saw a rather crumpled nightshirt and a shabby sponge bag.

"Look underneath," called down the little man.

She plunged in her hand and to her intense thankfulness her fingers met a good, strong rope, that filled up with its coils the whole of the bottom of the bag, as a serpent might have done. She pulled it out. It was amazingly strong, smooth, and flexible. The next moment she saw that it had a running noose at one end that passed through a brass ring. Her mind became very clear and cold. She handled the thing without any distaste. She even thought how convenient the running noose would be.

"Be quick," urged the young man, who was still peering in behind the flaming red head of that apparently commonplace little man. "Get her out before she sees what it is."

SOLANGE worked the noose down over the limp form of the elderly woman, pulled her arms through it so that they hung out helplessly each side, and then flung the free end of the rope upwards. The little man with the red head caught hold of it, and began to pull. Solange heaved with all her strength upon the dead weight of the old lady. She was a very frail old lady, it appeared, now that Solange had her hands upon her, but she was heavy, nevertheless, with the weight of her unconsciousness.

"Be careful. Try not to cut her face any worse," Solange called up.

The little man seemed amazingly strong as well as deft with his hands. He groaned and sweated, but he pulled the woman up till her head and shoulders were through the window untouched by the jagged frame of glass. Then he clutched her under the arms and pulled her right through the opening.

"Wait a moment, lass," he called down to Solange. "I'll have thee out in a jiffy."

He disappeared, and Solange felt terrifyingly alone. The heat seemed suffocating, the crackling was nearer, and through the roar of escaping steam and the roar of the flames she could still hear faint thin cries from further down the train. She was never so thankful to see anyone in her life as she was to see the red head of the public executioner appear once more above her. He lowered the rope down to her, and she fitted it round her waist, and, taking a good purchase with her hands, kicked her way up the carriage and was in her turn pulled out into safety. The air was fresh and sweet, for the smoke was being blown away in the opposite direction, and for a moment Solange felt, as she stood swaying a little upon the grass at the side of the track, that it was good merely to be alive. Then she looked about her. The train was piled on itself in the most fantastic fashion. The engine lay upon its side. The accident had happened at a level crossing, and already there were motor-cars going backwards and forwards, and people busy at work.

"I reckon they're all out now," said the little red-headed man, wiping his wet brow with the back of his hand. "Eh, that was a near thing, lass!"

It dawned on Solange that he was still holding one end of the rope, which was round her waist, as if she were a heifer being led to market, and she suddenly realized, emotionally, as well as with her mind, what it was that had saved her. She began to tear at it with her fingers, feeling as near to hysteria as she had ever felt in her calm, well-ordered life.

"I'll tak' it off, lass," said the little man, apologetically. "I was sorry about it. I

didn't want you to see it, but there weren't no other way."

While he was talking he began to ease the rope from about her waist.

"That's why I didn't get in at Merchester. You see, with my red hair, I'm what you might call noticeable like. They drove me from t'jail t'next station."

He had got the rope off her by now, and was coiling it round his own waist, under his coat. "Government property nowadays," he explained as he did so. "I mun use this again next week."

"Did the young man help you?" asked Solange. "Was he helping you with us? It must have been dreadfully heavy work otherwise."

The little red-headed man stared at her.

"What young man?" he asked.

"The young man who looked in at the carriage window and woke me up. He told me to wake you up. The young man who told us we must have a rope."

"I'll get one o' they cars to take 'e home, lass," said the red-headed little man, with a rather worried expression on his face. "Tha'll be wanting a lay down."

"But did he?" persisted Solange.

"There weren't no young man that I ever saw or heard of, nowt but you waking me and telling me to get out and get rope. You saved my life, lass. I'd ha burned . . ." and he pointed to the railway carriage which was now a roaring furnace, the flames were pale almost to invisibility in the bright sunlight, but their heat reached Solange where she stood.

"Well, there was a young man," said Solange, wondering whether red-head had been too confused to notice him, "and, what's more, it was the young man who woke me up. It was he saved the lot of us."

She looked about her, and saw the elderly woman lying in the grass some twenty yards away where the little man had dragged her. The young man was kneeling beside her, his head bent down to hers. The woman's eyes were open, and she was looking up into his face with a smile upon her own. She opened her mouth as though to speak but the young man very gently laid his fingers, long, delicate, over-white fingers, against her lips. A little crowd of people, among them two men bearing a stretcher, were approaching the woman. The young man bent a little lower over her, then raised his head and looked across at Solange. She could see his face clearly now in the bright sunlight, it was no longer shadowed as it had been when he was peering down into the railway carriage, and with a pang, half of incredulity, half of pure terror, she saw that he had a port-wine stain, shaped like a bat's wing, lying over one cheek beneath the eye. The stretcher-bearers and their assistants closed in about the woman and began to lift her. Solange ran towards them. She seemed to have lost the young man in the little crowd of people, but she motioned the stretcher-bearers to stay still for a moment, and thinking she might be some relation or friend, they did so.

"Did you see him?" asked Solange, bending over the woman. "Did you see him?"

The woman smiled at her: "I saw him," she said; "he must have escaped after all. You won't tell anyone, will you?"

"No, no," said Solange, "I won't tell anyone."

"He said it was all right," said the woman, feebly. "He said I should meet him this evening. He was always a good boy, was my Tim, though I knew he was marked for misfortune from the moment I first set eyes on that bat's wing on his poor face, but he was always good to his mother. 'Don't worry, mother,' he's just told me, 'it's all right. I'll see you this evening!'"

She closed her eyes and seemed to drift into unconsciousness.

"Where are you taking her?" asked Solange.

"Cottage Hospital, Miss," said one of the stretcher-bearers. "It isn't far. Just down the road," and they set off, carrying their burden carefully over the uneven ground.

The little red-headed man, who had stayed behind to fasten his coat completely over the rope, now came up to Solange.

"I wish I could get a hat," he complained. He was evidently worried about his conspicuous hair.

"I don't think anybody will notice," said Solange; "they've got other things to think about now, you see."

He jerked his red head towards the disappearing stretcher. "Who was t'owd lady?" he asked. "Did tha know her?"

"She was the mother of the young man who saved us," said Solange.

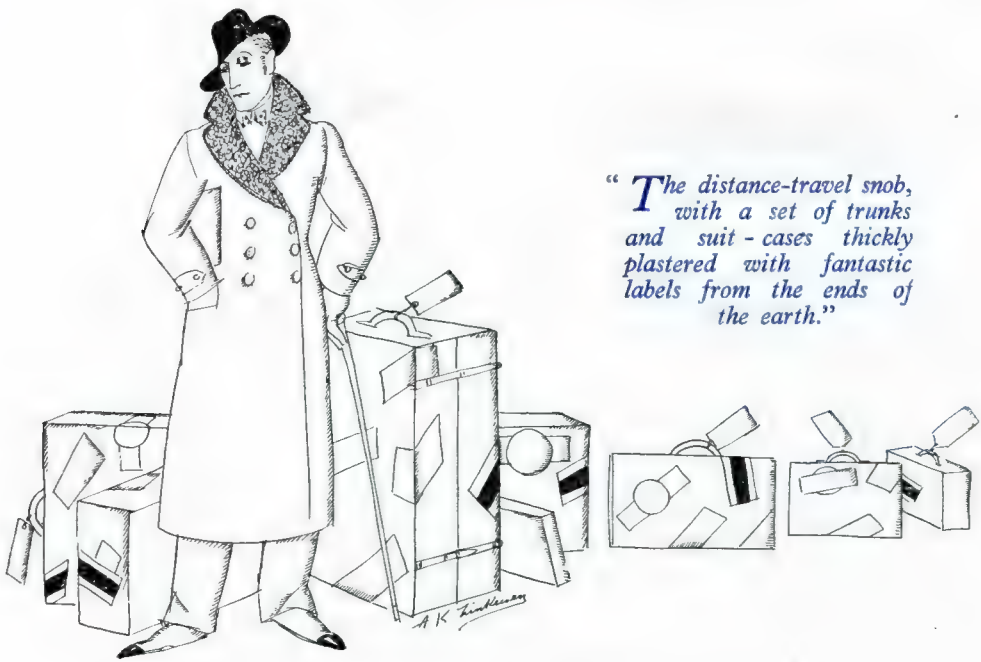
IT was most unreasonable, she concluded later, that she had refused to share the offer of a car up to town with the little red-headed man. After all, he had, under instruction, saved her life, and there were souls evidently capable of resentment and crime but capable also of forgiveness. There was no reason why she shouldn't like to stay with the red-headed man whom Tim Jackson had saved from a death by fire. Nevertheless, Solange was glad to have seen the last of him, and glad also that Mrs. Jackson died that evening in the local hospital, without knowing what it was that had been passed over her head and fastened about her body.

TRAVEL SNOBS

AS I have just completed a journey of over twenty thousand miles, I feel that I am in a position to say something about travel snobs. You will have noticed already that I have turned into a travel snob myself. That mention of the distance, that dragging in of "over twenty thousand miles," gives me away. Obviously I am one of those travel snobs who like to brag of the distances they have gone, the twenty-, thirty-, or forty-thousand milers.

We are the people who have no use for short journeys. Nothing less than ten thousand miles interests us. In these days of easy and rapid travel, there is not much to boast about in travelling great distances, but, nevertheless, we do what boasting we can. Perhaps we ought to be moved to another and larger planet, such as Jupiter. What scope there would be for distance-travel snobs on Jupiter!

I know a young novelist who goes round and round the world, and he says it is because he is looking for local colour. As a matter of fact, he writes the same novel over and over again, and would be better off if he stayed in Kensington. He does not really want local colour, but the satisfaction of having travelled enormous distances. He wants to have a set of trunks and suit-cases thickly plastered with fantastic labels from the ends of the earth. I do not say that I am as bad as this fellow, but I feel that I could be if I let myself go, for the germ is there. It is doubtful if there is any proper cure for a distance-travel snob, though the gift of a magnificent set of maps and charts might help, for the distance-travel snob has a not ignoble passion for maps and charts, and he might possibly be induced to do his travelling at home, merely with a finger



"The distance-travel snob, with a set of trunks and suit-cases thickly plastered with fantastic labels from the ends of the earth."

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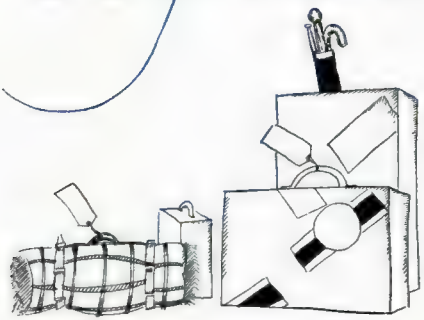
"The speed-travel snob, who asks you to guess where he was only ten days ago."

across the map. But in any case, we need not worry about the distance-travel snob, for though there are times when he can be insufferable, he is undoubtedly the least offensive of all travel snobs.

Let us consider the other varieties. In an ascending scale of offensiveness, we come next to the speed-travel snob, chiefly discovered among wealthy Americans. He is the man who asks you to guess where he was only ten days ago. On being told that you give it up, he tells you triumphantly that he was in Honolulu or Bangkok or Valparaiso. If you have any sense and know the breed, you will merely say "Oh!" or "Really!" and then quickly walk away. But if you express surprise, then you are in his toils for the next twenty minutes.

He proceeds to explain exactly how it was done, how he just caught various boats and

By **J. B. PRIESTLEY**



Decorated by Anna Zinkeisen

"The wonderful-little-place snob who cries, 'We stayed for three months in a little place called Torpa. Right off the beaten track!'"

trains by the skin of his teeth, chartered airplanes, dashed over mountains in fast cars. If you are not careful, he will make you work it out for yourself. He will enlarge on the narrative at all points. "I knew if I could get down to the docks by three on Friday," he will cry, staring hard at you, "I could make it. That meant I could catch Monday's plane, and just make the Transcontinental on Tuesday night." And then he will go on to tell you how many wires and cables and radiograms he sent, and how he thought he would never do it, and how other people were certain he could never do it, and all the time he will insist on mentioning the skin of his teeth until at last you begin to imagine and to hope that at any moment the skin of his teeth will choke him.

The only way to deal with these speed-travel snobs is to pretend a complete ignorance of geography and transport. When he tells you that he came from Honolulu or Bangkok in ten days, express no surprise whatever, but simply look as if you were expecting him to go on and justify his statement by something really interesting. Or you can say "Oh, yes?" raise your eyebrows, and then wait. If this does not produce the required result, then try other tactics, and swear boldly that a friend of yours came from Honolulu or Bangkok in eight days. And then go, go at once, without giving him time to ask questions and bring out time-tables. That should teach him a sharp lesson.

You need money to be a speed-travel snob, and that is why there are not many of them about. We now come to some commoner and even more offensive varieties. First, there is the wonderful-little-place-that-nobody-ever-visits snob. Italy and Spain are perhaps the happiest hunting-grounds of these creatures. The species has males, but the female predominates. "My dear!" it cries, wobbling like a pinky-brown jelly. "We stayed for three months in a little place called Torpa. Right off the beaten track . . . no English or Americans . . . simply marvellous, my dear . . . absolutely unspoilt . . . the Cathedral . . the Castle . . . the old market . . . peasant women . . ." And on and on she burbles. There is not a returning boat train that does not deposit a dozen or so of these menaces on to the

platform. They are one of the horrors of the age.

You are convinced that they are lying about their wonderful little places. You are sure that these wonderful little places are nothing but third-rate towns or villages that nobody visits because they are not worth visiting. But, if you are simple and truthful, you have to confess that you have never been there, and, therefore, you have to go on listening to these daft rhapsodies and pretending to believe them. For my part, having long ceased to be simple and truthful, when I find myself faced with a hearty specimen of this variety of travel snob, I do not hesitate to lie, and to lie boldly and swiftly. "Yes, yes, yes," I cry, with a gesture of impatience, "I know Torpa (or Blatha, or whatever it is). Went there a few years ago. Spent a day or two there and was terribly bored." If this does not suffice, you can then and there invent a still smaller and more wonderful little place of your own, with which to annihilate the noisy pest. It must be remembered that these wonderful-little-place snobs are on the increase, so that stern measures are necessary. Do not hesitate. As soon as they have mentioned the name of the wretched place, silence them with your fine brave lie, then bolt for cover.

Another variety, sometimes overlapping with the little-placers, is the delightful-habits-of-the-native snob. These snobs are often literary ladies and gents. They are people who jeer at their fellow-countrymen, but are always delighted with foreigners, especially remote foreigners of a different colour.

If the natives of England or the United States try to enjoy themselves, these snobs are the first to sneer at them. But when these snobs have crossed a sea or two, they are wild with enthusiasm over the noisiest and stupidest holiday-making. With them, everything at home is drearily vulgar and everything in the distant country is gay and charming. The sight of an Italian peasant, who has had a few pulls at the wine-flask and is now busy slapping himself on the chest and boasting, nearly drives them crazy with delight. Such enchanting high spirits! These snobs write books about the South Seas. The natives of Tahiti have a habit, when festive, of piling themselves into rattling old cars and then going singing and shrieking round the island. The natives in

"*The sight of an Italian peasant who has had a few pulls at the wine-flask and is now busy slapping himself on the chest, drives the habits-of-the-native snob crazy with delight.*"

some places nearer home have a similar habit of piling themselves into motor chars-à-bancs and then going singing and shouting and waving empty beer bottles. I have observed both sets of people, and there seems to me precious little difference between them, except that the home natives sing much better than those of Tahiti. But the true delightful-habits-of-the-native snob discovers a world of difference. He cheers the noisy Tahitians, but turns sadly away from the noisy Cockneys or New Yorkers.

Many of these snobs are women, and it is curious to note the difference in their attitude towards—let us say—drunks at home and drunks among the delightful natives. If one of their servants at home is lazy, or robs them, there is no end to their indignation, but they take a positive delight in being badly served or robbed by the delightful native servants. And then what fun it is to be cheated by the charming native shopkeeper! How different from the sordid practices of shopkeepers at home! What fascinatingly wrong change or short weight the enchanting native shopkeeper gives you! What graceful and romantic incivility and impudence! What dear, delightful people! There is nothing to be done with these snobs. It is no use inventing still more charming and romantic natives of your own. They would only want to compare notes about them. No, the only thing to do is to clear out as early as possible, or, if the snob is an author, to give away or burn the book.

This post-War age has brought into existence a new and horrible travel snob, with which I am already familiar, though you may not know many of him yet. He is the new-country-secret-police snob, and he is usually a journalist, hanger-on to the League of Nations, or assistant professor of modern history in some deplorable university. The point about him is that he always travels in these new states that were created by the Treaty of Versailles, and that when he is in these countries, he is always spied upon by the secret police.

You may ask why such an insignificant person should be followed by the secret police. He never tells you exactly why, but the inference is that he is not an insignificant person, that since he wrote that article on Jugo-Slavia or gave that lecture on the Polish Corridor, all the secret police in Central Europe have been waiting for him. He sees himself as the hero of a sensational novel of international intrigue. His travels abroad are worlds away from the travels of ordinary tourists, your travels and mine. He knows for certain that his bags were searched that night in Dantzig. Then there was the mysterious fellow in the café in Trieste. And who was it refused to let him take that car in Sarajevo? Why were his passports held up for five days in Prague? That girl in Warsaw—had he not seen her before in Belgrade? And so it goes on.

These wild snobs return home, to sit complacently smoking their very foreign cigarettes and taking up your time with their legends and irritating you by their insufferable airs of superiority. They are a menace to the great cause of international peace. They are conceited asses, and they are bores. But only the plainest speaking, of a kind from which we all shrink, would put an end to their stories.

We ought to put up a hand, lean forward, and quietly say, "My dear chap, you are deceiving yourself in the most ridiculous way. I admit that secret police are very silly, but even they are not silly enough to care tuppence about you, for the fact is, you are nobody in particular. Your bags were not touched in Dantzig. The mysterious fellow in Trieste was probably a commercial traveller. Your passports were held up in Prague because a clerk forgot them. The girl in Warsaw was a third-rate cabaret dancer who stared at you because she thought you were the young man who was once engaged to her cousin. You really must stop imagining things in this way. Next time you go abroad, behave like a sensible tourist. That is all you are—or, at least, should be, if you had any sense. And now—good night." That is what we ought to say, but we never do.

LAST of all, there is the discomfort-travel snob. Many people in my trade, I regret to say, are discomfort-travel snobs. You see, it is possible in these days to go all over the world and travel in reasonable comfort, to have clean sheets, three fairly good meals a day, and other pleasures of civilization. This excellent state of affairs has, unfortunately, bred the discomfort-travel snob. He or she (and there seems to be as many of one sex as the other) insists upon making travel as uncomfortable as possible.

The discomfort snob likes to make voyages in rickety canoes or in schooners, where there is no food fit to eat and you share a bunk with a Chinese cook. The discomfort snob will never take a train or a car if there is a flea-bitten mule to be had, and enjoys nothing better than being eaten alive by mosquitoes. To go without a hot bath for four weeks and sleep in your clothes for five is a discomfort snob's idea of a good holiday. Life is not worth living, apparently, until your boot soles are gone, you have blisters on both feet, and there are still twenty-five miles of mountain or jungle to be crossed. British and American Consuls,

all over the world, know the discomfort snob only too well, for, time after time, they are compelled to rescue these absurd creatures from the worst results of their folly and vanity.

What makes these people so tiresome is that they are not content to travel in their own silly way and let it go at that. They must sneer at other people who do not happen to share this passion for discomfort. They write little books or articles in which they jeer at "tourists in floating hotels" and the like. The sight of some clean clothes, the very smell of a decent meal, drives them to fury. They seem to imagine that it is a crime both to travel and at the same time enjoy good food and eight hours' sleep every night in a bed.

To those of us who do not happen to be discomfort snobs, it is a piece of luck if a ship happens to be a floating hotel, and most honest sailors share the same opinion. I have never found that meals of raw fish and dirty rice, blisters on my feet, mosquitoes feeding on my legs, seasickness and sleeplessness, enable me to appreciate whatever there is to see and admire on my travels.

What I can enjoy in discomfort I can enjoy still more in comfort. If self-mortification is the object, then there might be something to be said for these bad modes of travel. But that is rarely the object. It is all snobbery and vanity, and the sooner it is recognized as such, the better. Meanwhile, I do not think I shall travel extensively again for some time. It might be amusing to turn into a refuse-to-travel, stay-at-home, East-West-Home's-Best snob.

"MINE!"

By

MAY EDGINTON

Illustrated by LESLIE OTWAY

"RETIRED!" said Mrs. Eriksen.

Miss Crowley smiled.

"It must be a fine feeling," said Mrs. Eriksen. "All your work over; no more to do all the days of your life. I'd sink the insurance in an annuity if I was you. I wouldn't leave none behind. And then you've got bonds, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"All your packing done, I see. Have a bit of supper with us for old times' sake. We're sorry to lose you."

"Thank you. I shall be pleased."

"Boss sorry to say good-bye, too, eh?"

"Oh, well," said Miss Crowley with a faint smile, "he's glad—and you can understand it—to see me go—and provided for—so that he can get a younger one."

"That's life all over!"

"I'll be down soon, then, Mrs. Eriksen."

The door of the top room shut upon Mrs. Eriksen. And Miss Crowley sat herself down in the same armchair by the high dormer window through which she had looked out at the morning and evening sky—at such times as she had leisure—for the last thirty years. The work was over; the long years of saving had earned their reward. It was harvest. This very day the Moon Insurance Company had paid her money into the bank; ten thousand dollars. She had bonds which had, under her scared and watchful eye, appreciated minutely but steadily, till their sale, yesterday, had added six thousand dollars to the account. Moreover, she had a week's salary—twenty-five dollars—in her pocket; and she owed not a cent to anyone. It was a lot for a little woman to have done. And the money was what she was thinking about as she sat under the high-set window, with the stars looking in, and the dusty city still toiling below her.

She looked at the room. It had been a good room to her, and she was faintly grieved to say good-bye to it. Mrs. Eriksen had been a bride when Miss Crowley had taken the room from her, and now she was a grandmother, stout and swelled, with only the light in her eyes remaining of her old self.

Miss Crowley regarded her packed trunk. Small as it was, it was by no means full. She had always kept exactly two outfits; except for the cottons she made up for herself in the hot weather; and she now wore one; and the other was in the trunk.

Ah; but presently. . . .

A smile touched Miss Crowley's lips, a smile of sheer wonder at herself and what was about to happen. She rose from her chair, a very small, thin, parched woman, with very small, thin limbs, and grey hair; and went down to join the Eriksen supper.

"Sorry to lose her, grampa," said Mrs. Eriksen, surrounded by people in varying sizes, of her's and grampa's creation.

In the intervals of feeding, smacking, eating and complaining and laughing, Mrs. Eriksen caught the look in Miss Crowley's eyes that every woman knows when she sees

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Never during all those years in America had she been able to utter one of the most divine words in the language : " Mine." But now she was saying daily to Sir John : " ' My ' darling niece . . ." " ' My ' sister . . ."

it ; and sighing, and yet smiling over the youngest grandchild—dumped into her care —Mrs. Eriksen said :—

" You never had anybody belonging to you, did you ? "

" I have a very beautiful sister to whom I am devoted, most happily married to a very rich man in England, and they have the loveliest daughter, and I am just off to visit them at last," said Miss Crowley.

* * * *

When the parcels arrived—during the early supper—Miss Crowley carried them upstairs, and afterwards Mrs. Eriksen joined her in the top room.

Clothes were laid out on the bed ; not many ; but such clothes ! Brocade frocks and evening slippers ; fur-trimmed cloak ; hats, suits, *lingerie*, silk stockings, tweed travelling outfit.

" Violet Crowley ! " declaimed Mrs. Eriksen, surprised out of her usual formal attitude to her reserved lodger. " Have you come into money ? "

" I've sold my bonds for this visit home. Clothes and fares ; and a thousand dollars in my pocket ! "

" Thousand . . You—talking in thousands."

" I bought this, too," said Miss Crowley, showing a large pink tin box of creams, powders, rouges, and so on.

" Beauty stuff ! You never ! "

" I've bought an innovation trunk."

" No ! "

" Yes."

" You never so much as mentioned a sister not once all these thirty years. Grampa and me always thought you had no belongings. Don't she write ? "

" We stopped writing some time ago——"

" Don't she come over to see you ? "

" She said once—many years ago—that she was coming ; but I—unfortunately we missed each other."

" Not what I call relations ! "

Miss Crowley closed her lips upon her belated confidences, but she was smiling ; the smile would not come off her mouth. ' You're transmogrified," said Mrs. Eriksen, making for the door as a baby began to cry somewhere. " I'll just ask you—if you'll be so good—to recommend this room if you get a chance. It isn't everybody cares for the look of this house. I'll not let it easy. A person has to know me to like me."

" I'll recommend you," said Miss Crowley, with a very pretty inclination of the head.

All night she did not draw the blind down over the stars in the picture-frame of the window. She wanted to gaze into the high and limitless sky.

II.

MISS CROWLEY began to live her third day of life. The first had been when she shut an office door for ever behind her, and knew that her money was in the bank ; the second was when she packed her new clothes in her new trunk ; the third began on the ship, in her new tweed frock and cape. The big, toiling, grinding city of the New World was wiped from her vision as a mark from a slate, for she was going home the rich, successful business woman that her letters had described her.

" I'm getting on. . . ."

" You should see my big office now, dear. . . ."

" One day I'll have to take time from business to come and see you and Baby . . "

Such letters over the course of years had been answered in her sister Phœbe's big impetous writing.

" I've got four lines in the new musical show at Daly's. . . ."

" There's the best looking fellow I ever saw who comes every night. . . ."

" I've met him at a supper club. . . ."

" I'm marrying Arthur next week. He has a flat and a place on the river, and two cars. . . ."

" I wish you could see my baby girl . . ."

" It's so splendid, Violet darling, that we've both succeeded—in our different ways. I couldn't bear it if you weren't rich, too. 'Cos you'd never tell me ; you remember our funny promises ? "

As Miss Crowley lay in her deck chair well wrapped against the wind, she was remembering the funny promises they had made each other over thirty years ago ; she twenty ; Phœbe seventeen. " If one gets rich first, the other shall never be a drag on her. We'll make our own lives. We'll fight our own battles. And then we'll meet—two successful women—and tell each other everything. Good-bye, darling. Good-bye, darling. Good-bye. Good-bye."

" Phœbe never married till she was nearly thirty," Miss Crowley thought. " Baby must be twenty-one."

Miss Crowley was prepared for absolutely any strange thing to happen during this amazing and colourful patch that she was sewing into the grey spread of her life ; in fact, as she lay in her long chair, for all her wordly gown and her touch of make-up to suit it, and her grey hair and the crows' feet about her eyes, she was like a child, breathless to see what will happen ; and that—in spite of all her good clothes and her apparent adequacy—was the impression that she made upon observant strangers.

Therefore, this was the effect she had upon the observant stranger who sat beside her, a tall authoritative fortyish man ; a

distinguished man with a look of power, and yet kind eyes above his upturned tweed coat collar. He was raising a pair of glasses from his knee just as Miss Crowley thought: "Baby must be twenty-one."

"Excuse me: would you care to see the boat—I think it's the *Majestic*—just passing us?"

He adjusted the glasses for Miss Crowley perfectly to sight an ocean queen; unwrapped her rug for her, and went with her to the side.

So that when they resumed their chairs again and he had re-wrapped the little middle-aged lady, they began to talk. And soon Miss Crowley was sketching for him all the pictures of life as she had sketched it for Phœbe—without actually lying, just as never had she actually, *verbatim*, lied to Phœbe; rich little business woman, paying her first visit home in many years to see lovely married sister, formerly on the stage, with transcendently lovely daughter.

And from that hour, when they sat together on deck, or walked together—for he became very chivalrous, attentive, and kind—Miss Crowley could revel in what had been for her a torturing secret dream.

Never during all those long years had she been able to utter one of the most divine words in the language: "Mine." Never had she been able to say: "I am going with 'my' friends here"; or "I am going with 'my' relations there." Or "'My' lover is calling," or "'My' husband and I . . ." or "That fair-haired baby you see—the beautifullest at the party—that baby is Mine."

But now she was saying daily to Sir John Mattison—who was Governor of the Lahlama Islands where the palms waved, and the tropic flowers grew, and where his house was built of white coral—"'My' darling niece" . . . "'My' sister" . . . "'My' home," and she was enriched thereby. She was enlivened as some little flowering tree thrust for too long into a frozen climate.

Sir John was going home briefly; on private business.

* * * *

He said on the last day: "We must meet again if you will."

"But, of course. I'll be staying with my sister, and any of my friends will be welcome there. I'm not quite sure where. . . ."

A sudden doubt assailed her as to whether Phœbe had changed her address.

"I'll write to you, care of the shipping company; that'll find you. If I may?"

III.

HER sister's car was not at Paddington to meet Miss Crowley; but—as she said brightly to Sir John—she was taking them by surprise. So she was whisked off in a taxi-cab with her innovation trunk on top before he could say, chivalrously: "Let me drive you where you are going."

It was impossible for her to deny the rather shattering sensation of intruding into a strange world; but she struggled with it. She drove to the block of flats from which—years ago—Phœbe had written. They looked expensive and handsome—but so did she!

"Mrs. Arthur Baron?"

"Mrs. Arthur Baron?" a splendid hall-porter repeated, shaking his head. But after a long effort he remembered: "She left here—oh, must be ten years ago, madam, when the gentleman died."

"Mr. Baron's dead?"

"Yes, madam."

She had a riverside address, and was soon out of town. But the river house—not so much of a house after all—was empty, shuttered, shut up, neglected, sad, desolate. Nearby were some house agents, however, who said that letters could be forwarded to Miss Phœbe Baron at such an address.

Miss Crowley had forgotten her London, and the *locale* of that address meant little to her.

She travelled back to town.

And, in a taxi-cab again, she drove through now darkening streets, the sort of streets that were familiar to her; not serene, proud residential streets; but the other kind, busy and anxious; with open markets and housewives wan and weary doing their evening bargaining. There was a true thing in Miss Crowley's inferred label on herself; she was a business woman—if not a rich one. She knew signs of poverty or affluence at a glance; calculated rents and prices with an instant accuracy that would have been brilliance had it not been hard necessity instead. Before she reached the grimy front door of the grimy house Miss Crowley knew.

"Mrs. Baron?"

"Died a monf ago. The daughter's upstairs, wants looking after . . . Second floor; first door."

Phœbe dead. And now, nerving herself very desperately to face all, and thanking heaven for her well-cut tweed which had made the poor landlady's eyes shine, Miss Crowley went up just such a frowsy staircase as she knew well; speechless with difficult tears that would not fall, and numbed with the resignation of experienced years. *Phœbe dead.* She knocked and a young voice said "Come in." In she went and saw the loveliest girl you could dream of, on a bed, so ill and so thin.

Yet suddenly, on the threshold, meeting those splendid young-girl eyes in the white young-girl face, the glory that had waxed and waned rose again to its peak in Miss Crowley's heart, as if she saw in flaming

writing on all the poor walls: "This is Mine!"

In another moment they were together. Young Phœbe had told all; they wept together and yet smiled together. Young Phœbe realized that rich Aunt, fabled Aunt, Aunt of the successful letters, had appeared from the Paradise of a more affluent world to save her.

* * * *

"Hasn't anyone cared for you, Baby, since mother died?"

"There's a dear old man, a violinist on the ground floor, who has been very kind. He's going away."

"I must thank him," said Miss Crowley, graciously.

While the poor landlady, much brightened, hastened about lighting a fire for the invalid to dress by, Miss Crowley descended to the dear old man. Opening to her knock, he saw a very elegant little lady. He was attenuated, shabby, with a beautiful, worn face. Old? About her own age. "I've come to thank you for your kindness to my niece, Phœbe Baron," she said, graciously. "I hear you're going away."

"I'm going to Chicago where I once knew some people."

In she went and saw the loveliest girl you could dream of, but so ill and so thin.

That struck a recently quivering chord in her so that she looked at him very attentively.

"Won't you come in?" he said, courteously. She went in. Memories of just that kind of room were fresh in her. She looked about, and saw the photograph of a marvellously jolly dog over the mantelpiece. So she walked across and looked at it.

"That was my dog," said the elderly violinist; "I have had to give him away—a country home. But that dog was mine."

"He's a beauty!" said Miss Crowley, a little croakily.

"Yes, madam. I am glad you have come to look after the young lady, madam, now that I am off to Chicago."

"I come from Chicago!"

"Oh, do you, madam? I hope to get engagements there, from what my friends said—but that was long ago. What is the city like now?"

Miss Crowley paused. It is a great big city," she said. "Immense."

"Oh great big city," she suddenly thought, "don't devour him!"

"I can tell you of a very respectable landlady," she said, "Mrs. Eriksen, of this address. . . ."

It was as if, giving the address to this stranger, she had severed joyously the final cord that bound her to the great big grinding city.

IV.

THERE fell upon Miss Crowley's very small shoulders a mantle of unprecedented gorgeousness. Behold ! she was the Rich Relation ! The Divine Lady ! The giver of gifts ! The complete reversal of expectations in that one moment before she crossed the horrid room, carried her up to a pinnacle of exaltation that she had never before glimpsed, strain her sight upward as she might. The unknown Arthur Baron dead, lovely sister Phœbe dead, surprises, disappointments, disillusions, shattered dreams—these all painted themselves gold as sunshine.

No time to be wasted at all ! Years of poverty, humiliation, even disgrace—not told in proud letters to Rich Aunt ; no money ; Young Phœbe " resting " from her indefinite stage work ; little riverside house mortgaged to the full, and, as a matter of fact, now fallen into the hands of the mortgagees.

" My darling, forget it all ; nothing matters ; I am here," said Rich Aunt, drawing around her the golden mantle which rendered humble Violet Crowley invisible. " We must make you well," she cried.

Specialist, nursing home—it was just in time, they said, for this emaciated girl was easy prey for any death-dealing disease or sickness to seize her. And while Young Phœbe was fed and nursed—making a recovery with the marvellous recuperative speed of the young—Miss Crowley, in the happiness of her heavenly madness, found a furnished house, complete with four servants, and she engaged it for three months.

But with this, Miss Crowley had, of course, another thing to do. She transferred the ten thousand dollars paid by the Moon Insurance Company into the bank in Chicago to a bank in London.

It was a charming little house ; sweetly furnished. " Look, Phœbe honey, this sitting-room's your own—to entertain your friends in. . . ."

" Aunt, I haven't any friends, really."

" I've thought of that." Indeed, she had. When she took the house at a most reasonable rent from a bankrupt peeress, she had —by what flash of genius ?—stipulated for a little assistance in the way of the peeress's visiting list.

She and Phœbe did not need many visitors, many acquaintances ; but they must have a few.

And a few people, poor and grasping, but aristocratic, called to look at them.

But before the few people had called, Miss Crowley had—with another strange flash of genius—done another thing. She had rung up—from the telephone in her new home—the Gold Star Shipping Offices to inquire for letters ; and there had been one from Sir John Mattison.

" Dear Miss Crowley," he wrote. *" I shall be very charmed if you will dine with my at my club, where—though to a most churlishly limited degree—we are pleased to welcome ladies. . . ."*

She wore a new gown and was an elegant small figure.

" Dear little lady," he thought. She wove a tale reticently about the family misfortunes which she had sadly found ; of her pretty niece, and of their happiness together. " I have taken a house overlooking Regent's Park, rather small, but quite big enough for us. Do dine one night, with just a very few friends."

They were, indeed, just a very, very few friends ; a retired Major living at his club and on his wits ; a sweet, poverty-stricken titled spinster ; the bankrupt peeress's fashionable lawyer and his wife, looking for prey—but they were all that Miss Crowley had.

However, they looked very well, assembled in the drawing-room, when, tall and broad, with his quick, sure look of the ruler, Sir John Mattison walked in.

It was strange, she thought, how she could hide and silence the singing ecstasies in her heart so that none of these clever worldlings knew that she was not just a little grey woman, but Atalanta, Diana, Ceres ; Boadicea ; goddess of heavens ; empress of worlds ; female Jehovah ; Queen of Sheba.

The cocktails were being handed round on an heirloom salver when Phœbe walked in.

" My niece."

Never had there been so lovely a girl whom Rich Aunt had dressed, cossetted, and preened so beautifully ! Health coming back under her delicate skin that was like the pinky inside of a seashell ; lips red again and small and full ; pretty hands manicured so perfectly ; pretty hair waved so suavely ; lithe figure gowned so subtly ! Miss Crowley's bones felt as if turned to water, but her blood ran champagne in her veins :—

" My niece ! "

And at once—as if by another inevitable miracle in this delirium of miracles—Miss Crowley saw, felt, knew instantly that which fused and flamed between Phœbe and John Mattison, when their hands touched.

* * * *

" Bridge," said Miss Crowley after dinner, chaining the lawyer and his wife, the titled spinster and the Major to a card table.

John Mattison and Phœbe sat talking together on a couch across the room ; very, very softly, because of the bridge-players.

As if by a miracle Miss Crowley knew instantly that which fused and flamed between Phœbe and John Mattison when their hands touched.

"You must let me present her next season," said the titled spinster. "Why not allow your charming niece to stay with us?" said the lawyer's wife. "I understand there's been such a sad bereavement; she is motherless—and you yourself are returning to America soon?"

"Would you let your niece lunch with an old fellow one day?" asked the Major, reflectively.

But Miss Crowley, even in her continuous ecstatic delirium, knew clearly what was happening across the room. Sir John Mattison was saying to Phœbe: "I want your aunt to bring you to meet my sister—some friends—do you like dancing? Have you see this Persian Exhibition? Is there a chance that you and your aunt can do some theatres with a lonely man only home for a short time?" And: "Would you be interested to know something of the Lahlama Islands?" Miss Crowley guessed that he would be saying all this and more. And he was.

V.

FOR such a culmination Miss Crowley would not have dreamed, hoped, or prayed. Inspiration descended upon her. No scheming mother of many daughters could have been advantaged by more winged intuitions than she. The "small house just big enough for us" became quite a rendezvous for a—necessarily—limited circle, so that a background for the courtship of John Mattison and Phœbe was staged. And Miss Crowley—her expenditure mapped out to the last carefully but generously spent pound of the three months—was ravishingly happy.

And about the middle of the second month John Mattison came to tell her that he wanted to marry Phœbe and carry her back with him to his white-coral house on the Lahlama Islands.

They sat together by the drawing-room fire.

" You make me very happy, John, very happy indeed," said Miss Crowley, savouring, as she savoured the delicate novelties of her food and wines this family intimacy with so distinguished a baronet. " I would rather trust my Phœbe with you than with anyone else. Of course, you are marrying a penniless girl; but . . ."

Their protesting fingers mutually sketched a gesture of scorn at money.

" I'll take care of her," he said. He laid a great hand on Miss Crowley's. " If it hadn't been for you—coming when you did—think ! I should never have met her at all."

Miss Crowley looked down at the great hand, fine, masterful, and well-kept. She had taken dictation from the owners of such hands; but never had she touched one in friendship before. She gave John Mattison's hand a squeeze.

" When, John ? " she said, steadily, thinking of the money.

" We ought to sail in five weeks." How guilty he was about this rushing; how contrite ! And how her own heart thanked heaven !

" We'll have to hurry with the trousseau——"

" Look here, dear little lady——"

" Oh no ! no ! No, John ! I must have the entire pleasure of giving my niece that."

Now the remaining five weeks of this wondrous reign of Rich Aunt began to exceed any known speed limit in the way they rushed along. And between the orgies of clothes-buying, and giving the last dinner-parties, and displaying to their best advantage the few wedding presents that came in on Phœbe's side—not that a few of the hitherto invisible Baron family did not come up to scratch now that so handsome a connection was promised; and John's presents were staggering—Miss Crowley took time to gaze at the marvellous lovers. From behind the veils that all her life had screened her from love, from passion, from the warmth and fire of life, she looked, and parting the veils she saw clearly. At fifty-five she awoke; was reborn.

" So that is what it is like," she would say to herself, seeing them pass out together, silk-hatted, silk-cloaked, and generally exquisite, to a waiting car to dine and dance. Or, coming upon them—and fleeing silently away—in some moment when they thought themselves alone in the firelit drawing-room; or seeing them sit hand in hand before the spectacle of some divine mutual thought invisible to outsiders, she would murmur: " So that is what it is like."

She had now a little collection of cuttings from weekly papers, treasured. " Sir John Mattison and Miss Phœbe Baron walking in the Park." " Sir John Mattison and Miss Phœbe Baron looking at their wedding presents." " Sir John Mattison and his bride will leave for the Lahlama Islands immediately after the wedding and reception."

* * * *

THE wedding could not have been bettered. Everyone of the creditable few guests present said so—even the Barons, who—Miss Crowley knew now—had cast out Arthur and refused his wife. " Charmingly done, dear Miss Crowley," they said, pressing the hand of the elegant small lady in her excellent gown. " And are you really leaving us all so soon ? " they said.

" At once."

" It must be too marvellous to be a great American business woman ! "

So the organ music was over; and the angel chorister had sung his solo song of love. The reception had been smooth and gay. The cake had been cut, the champagne drunk; the flowers from the fashionable church duly directed to a hospital. All the gestures had been made.

And the white bride was upstairs changing her frock.

More than she had ever longed for anything Miss Crowley longed for the last minutes with Phœbe. But no. Up in the pretty bedroom was a bridesmaid; and the lady's maid whom John had already provided and who would put the wedding-dress in one of the already packed trunks; and then travel away with them. Miss Crowley must stay downstairs playing hostess, looking with a certain quiet hatred into the well-fed faces of dowagers and the arrogant faces of men who would always be rich, or fairly rich.

And now here came the bride ! Down the

"I was the former tenant," said Miss Crowley.
He could not believe her for a while; and then he exclaimed, sadly: "You want the room back?"

stairs, smiling, laughing, radiant, to meet her John who stood at the foot awaiting her; to embrace with love Rich Aunt—but to embrace others, too. Many embraces—Rich Aunt's but one.

Now Sir John Mattison was holding Miss Crowley's hand hard, and saying: "Mind you, you're to leave your office and all of it and come to visit us. You might love my islands. Never get too fascinated by Big Business again."

And there were a few laughs; and Miss Crowley said, laughingly, too: "This old woman will live and die in harness!"

"But you will come, darling?" cried Phœbe; yet was not surprised that Rich Aunt, already no doubt seeing in a vision her fine office, her important clients and her Big Business, made no promises more than smiles and kisses.

So soon the bride and bridegroom were away; and everyone went away, and left Miss Crowley really alone.

VI.

MISS CROWLEY left the small house in her blaze of glory, left satisfied servants, left the high life, and with seventy-five dollars — or fifteen English pounds—in her pocket beside her third-class steamer ticket, went aboard a slow ship that would take her again cheaply across three thousand miles of ocean. She still had her new big trunk and in it her new clothes, for they would serve as models for many a cheap rag she would be turning out for any customer she might be lucky enough to find. The look in employers' eyes had told her that they thought she was getting too old for office positions; but she had always been obliged to be a good seamstress, or there would never have been that ten thousand dollars insurance money nor that six thousand dollars in bonds; nor " my niece, Lady Mattison."

She talked very little on this voyage, for the glorious things she had to talk about were not to be bandied about the third class. But if she talked little she thought the more. And for the first time in her life she was afraid of the future, which now held no endowment or safety. And, arriving in New York, she left the metropolis as soon as might be, making the night-and-day journey to Chicago at the cheapest rate, carrying with her for economical travelling provisions bought from a *delicatessen*. And in Chicago once more, in that city wherein she had thought never again to set foot, she went steadily towards home—the top room in the tall house of the Eriksens.

The top room, with its remembered high window, seemed to her a refuge of beauty; and she prayed that it might not be let.

The front door of the rooming house stood open, and Mrs. Eriksen was out as Miss Crowley went hopefully on and on up the long stairs, and at last stood on the last landing outside the door which, for thirty years, had closed her in at night against the rapacious world outside. But as she raised her hand she heard coming from within the room a thin, sweet song from a violin.

" Of course ! " Miss Crowley thought; but before she thought this, she had rapped on the door to see if the room had a tenant; and now the door opened and there stood before her the elderly violinist, more etherealized even than before.

When he saw the small lady, still elegant in her now weary tweed clothes, his face lighted. " Why, you, madam ! " he cried, " the little girl's Aunt ! '

" May I come in ? " Miss Crowley murmured, " I must sit down."

And she was sitting in the chair she knew so well, looking up at the sky through the high window.

" It is wonderful of you to come to see me," said the violinist. " I told the good Mrs. Eriksen that a lady had recommended the room, and I tried to describe you—not having the pleasure of knowing your name—and she said you sounded like the former tenant. But I said: ' No, no ! ' I said. ' It was a rich and benevolent little lady who sent me here ! ' "

" But I was the former tenant," said Miss Crowley.

He could not believe her for awhile; and then he exclaimed, sadly: " You want the room back ? "

" Oh no ! no ! I have no right to ask such a thing."

" I love the high window," he said

" So do I."

" Do you know how the moon strikes on that pale roof over there——? "

" Till it isn't slate any more. It's silver ! I know. Do the pigeons come to you like they came to me ? "

" Every morning when I make my breakfast."

" Where do you play ? "

" Up here," he said with a wry smile, hanging his head, " up here mostly. Although I found work at a *café* on the lake shore."

" Your friends ? "

He spread his fine hands. " I don't know. Gone—dead, perhaps."

" You are quite alone ! "

" And you ? "

" Alone."

' My name is Peter Spence."

" Mine is Violet Crowley."

He bowed. " The little girl ? "

" Well. Happy. Married. I gave the bride away ! "

" A pretty wedding ? "

" Lovely ! I can show you. . . ."

" I will make some tea; like home."

" Let me help."

" Thank you. Are you not, then, a rich lady ? "

As they drank their tea Miss Crowley told him all.

It was still early afternoon. " Shall we walk a little ? " he said, " in a park ? By the lake? It is so wonderful to have a companion."

" I was thinking so, too."

" There is one thing about this country that I am going to like," said the violinist an hour later, as they walked slowly together in the fresh winter air, " it is that people can get married as quickly as they like."

He sat down on the wall by the lake side, and Miss Crowley sat beside him.

" Will you ? " he said. " At once ? "

" I have never dreamed of such a thing ! "

" Dream now," he said, tenderly.

" The room ? " she faltered.

" Will be ours."

Miss Crowley blushed. And she quailed ; but at the same time a reckless gaiety entered her soul, so that she put her hand in the hand of this cadaverous lover, nodding and laughing. He laughed, too. There seemed plenty to laugh about, and in that moment sadness vanished from the world.

They did not get home again until seven o'clock, for they lingered about the provision shops to buy their wedding feast. The street door of the tall house was still open, and a handful of tiny Eriksens were playing on the steps. Up they went, up the steep, steep stairs that were like a ladder to heaven, and when they got to the top, the moon, shining on a certain pale roof beyond their high window, was painting pictures in liquid silver. And by and by they wanted to unpack the bride's things ; to take out the wedding photograph.

The bridegroom lifted his violin, and began to play the Wedding March. " There's more than one bride in the world," he said, smiling, and he looked at his own bride instead of at the pictured young one.

" I will put the photograph here, on the chest of drawers," she said.

" I will get out the photograph of my dog, too," he answered ; " it's in the drawer."

" I will get it."

She placed the two photographs side by side.

Heavy footsteps climbed ; Mrs. Eriksen padded in, full of surprise, with the gift of a jug of hot coffee.

" My ! Sakes ! Miss Crowley ! "

" Mrs. Spence," said the bridegroom, playing variations of his lovely theme so softly that the notes seemed just to whisper in the room.

But the bride was slipping her arm through Mrs. Eriksen's, urging her towards the chest of drawers.

" Look, look, Mrs. Eriksen ! That's *our* niece, Lady Mattison. And look ! look ! this little fellow here—look at him ! Isn't he cute ? He's just staying with other folks now. But that's *our* dog."

ACROSTICS

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 220.

THOUGH now long centuries have passed away,
Remember, says the rhyme, that fateful day.

1. He bore the name of Jewish king, afloat
He served his country ; read what laureate wrote.
2. In play the club is taken by the queen,
No trace of drink at present can be seen.
3. Choose one of four, take word that means the same,
This adjective concerns its other name.
4. Little, we tell you ; if you ask for more,
Ghosts had appeared not many years before.
5. No country claims him, but his heart is here,
The mathematical parts must disappear.
6. What may be made of fibre, and is short,
To legal folk has fame and fortune brought.
7. One word, the first part of great city, take ;
One word subtract, the last part of a cake.
8. " Thither of old, earth's giant son to view,
On wings of wind with " him, we read, they flew.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 220 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on November* 10*th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 219.

THE Tropics ; this is not a trap,
You'll find them clearly on the map.

1. An entertainment which, no doubt
Delights us, but it leaves us out.
2. Half limb, half lady ; great in size ;
Disastrous was the enterprise.
3. If in were in instead of out.
'Twould very soon be knocked about.
4. To turn a trance into this kind
Of movement easy work you'll find.
5. From Eastern river Western take,
Beheading same result will make.
6. Foreign affliction here will seem
Like stuff of which young lovers dream.
7. From sunny Spain it comes, to bubble
About the brim and end in trouble.
8. In plural it would be one book ;
The door may shew it, if you look.
9. Daniel was this of part of it,
When with the lions made to sit.

W. J. B.

1. C	ir	C
2. A	rmad	A
3. N	ine	P
4. C	ante	R
5. E	nise	I
6. R	omanti	C
7. A	montillad	O
8. N	umbe	R
9. D	enize	N

NOTES.—Light 1. Circus. 3. Ninepin. 4. Trance, canter, anagrams. 5. The river Y ; Yenisei, spelled in many ways. 7. Ado, trouble. 9. Den.

REPORTED MISSING

By

LLEWELLYN HUGHES

VOLUME 17A in the archives of the German War Records is, like its thousand fellows, a pretty fair-sized tome. Let's take it down and open it at random. Page 141. BOE. Boehmer, D., private, 116th Reg., 17th Army Corps, etc. . . . killed in action. (We are translating. The writing, of course, is in German.) Boehmer, E. Boehmer, F. —killed in action—died of wounds—killed in action——

Let's study this one for a moment. Boehmer, L., Second lieutenant, 64th Batt., 7th Bavarian Guards, 11th Army Corps. Born Munich, 1892. Emigrated U.S.A., 1908. First American citizenship papers, November, 1913. Married Edith Harris, Brooklyn, N.Y., June, 1914. Returned Germany, July, 1914. Joined clerical staff, 11th Army Intelligence, Berlin, August, 1914.

(From which it might be adjudged that Mr. L. Boehmer had not been very serious in his intention to become an American citizen.)

But to continue. Promotion holding temporary commission, May, 1915, and transferred to Intelligence Headquarters at Coblenz. Commission confirmed, June, 1915. Promoted with acting rank of captain, September, 1916.

Now, note this!

On his request was transferred with rank of lieutenant to 64th Batt., 7th Bavarian Guards, 11th Army Corps in front line, April, 1918.

Rather singular, that! The Bavarian Guards were included in the German divisions which confronted the Americans south of Soissons; and April, 1918, corresponded with the time when the Yanks were about ready to start business. Boehmer could speak English fluently. He was familiar with the American vernacular, methods, and characteristics; a knowledge gained at first hand and also through study. For two years he had been a professor at Columbia University.

Then, concluding his war record, comes this final line.

Reported missing, September, 1918. Officially recorded missing, December, 1918.

. . . . . .

The grey, low-hanging clouds of a September afternoon boded rain. The gloom seemed stamped on every German face. Soissons had fallen before a savage and determined assault of the Americans, and absolute disaster threatened the whole German line. Back some three miles and somewhat to the left of Soissons, were concentrated two Bavarian divisions hurriedly brought down from the north. An immediate counter-attack on a large scale was imperative to save the situation. Everything now depended on this counter-attack. It had been planned with desperate and meticu-

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

lous attention to every detail. Nothing must be left undone to make it a success. Failure meant further retirement, and, most probably, the end of the German resistance. To drive in a wedge here was the only thing they could do. Successful, it would make Soissons untenable for the Americans and force their general withdrawal.

In a dug-out occupied by the 11th Corps Intelligence a young man of twenty-six or so was studying a series of maps, aerial photographs, and prisoners' statements placed at his disposal by Colonel von Wunderlich, Chief of Intelligence Headquarters in Coblenz. It was not the first time he had studied them. He had been at the job for three days and nights. Maps, photographs, and statements all had to do with the American line and supports, and the satisfaction the young man gained from studying them invariably occasioned a little smile. Tall, pale, his hollow, fretful eyes be-spectacled, lacking the scowl, the militaristic asperity typical of the German officer in the field, it was yet a little difficult to understand just why Leutnant Boehmer smiled.

HE slithered into a small shell-hole, and as he did so a bullet in his right shoulder nearly took his arm off.

For, really, it was no smiling matter. He had volunteered to pay a social visit to the enemy position under cover of night and in the guise of an American officer. It was quite possible that the Americans might not like the idea.

For the proposed counter-attack to achieve its purpose, accurate gunnery was of first importance. In fact, it was extremely necessary that every American battery, trench-mortar, machine-gun emplacement, ammunition and food dumps, should be smashed to atoms in this final welter of German explosive before their gallant soldiers went forward.

The staff engaged for the job had therefore made a most exhaustive study of all these features in the line opposite. Hundreds of photographs, taken from different angles, had been brought in by German airmen. Cross-roads were measured to an inch. From the photographs and the various shadows on them, the American position was hurriedly constructed in miniature, so that the officers leading the attack should be thoroughly familiar with every detail of their objective.

In the meanwhile a battalion of *Sturm-truppen* had gone over in a raid and brought back some American prisoners. These men were put through a strenuous examination as to their strength in the line, ammunition supply, and reserve force.

And in order to verify everything, Leutnant Boehmer had offered to crawl over and examine the American position on the ground.

Since the outbreak of war he had been attached to 11th Army Intelligence in Berlin, and, later, in Coblenz. With the entry of the United States into the fray, he had been transferred to a battalion in the line; though why he was so foolish as to do a thing like that, leaving a cushy job in order to present his chest to the Springfield rifles, nobody seemed to know.

Anyway, he had fought at Belleau Wood and Château Thierry, on both occasions displaying great gallantry, earning citations in despatches, and in the latter engagement suffering a slight wound. Here, again, he could have taken advantage of the situation—a shell splinter through the calf of his leg—and spent the rest of his war career in a base hospital. For there were only two more months of fighting to run.

But to Leutnant's Boehmer's everlasting credit he set an example to his men and fellow officers by remaining in the field, hobbling around until the wound commenced to heal up again. Very commendable!

Now all was ready for his great venture. He was smiling because he knew the trench-works of the American line so intimately that he felt he could find his way about them in the dark. His English, of course, was faultless; no trace of a German accent. The uniform of a captured American artillery officer had been altered to fit him, the division, brigade, and battery insignia carefully chosen.

WITH him at present was General von Lichner, a very brilliant artillery officer in charge of the several brigades of gun batteries primed and ready for the barrage. For some hours they had been discussing the artillery concentration, the signals, and various other matters relative to the attack. Leutnant Boehmer, although it was not put up to him in so many words, was not expected to come back. For this reason he was armed with a rocket pistol by means of which, in the event of his capture, he could signal a message back to his comrades. All this had been properly attended to. Its complications had been reduced to the simplest terms. That concluded, General von Lichner began talking of more personal things.

"Then your return to Germany in 1914 was in the nature of a honeymoon?"

"Yes."

"How long had you been married when you joined Army Intelligence?"

"Exactly six weeks."

Von Lichner seemed to be shocked. He started to put his sympathy into words, but Leutnant Boehmer merely shrugged.

"We hardly had time to get to know each other," he said. "It was better so. If we had been married six years instead of six weeks the separation might have been hard. As it was—well, a boy-and-girl affair. A momentary infatuation. I was twenty-two; she only nineteen."

The general studied him with kindly eye.

"So?" he said. "Love at that age is a rather vital thing. You are talking too much like the soldier, Herr Leutnant. I imagine that the parting between you and your young wife was a very emotional affair?"

Leutnant Boehmer gave no indication of it. "There was," he said, "no actual parting. We were unable to say good-bye." His voice was flat and toneless. "We had taken passage on an Italian boat sailing from Hamburg to New York, and"—his pale-blue eyes were melancholy—"she sailed without me, that's all."

"My deep regrets. She never rejoined you?"

"No."

"If I'm not too inquisitive—why was that?"

"Well—for one thing—I didn't want her to join me."

"I see. You corresponded, of course?"

"I sent her money—now and then. She replied, frequently. My wife was disappointed in me. Disappointed because I preferred to serve the country of my birth rather than remain aloof in the country of my intended adoption."

"But you did try, I understand, to return with her to America?"

"Yes. I had, as you know, a position at Columbia University. I had just married and was in no mood to relinquish my position for a further period of service in the German Army.

"That," he went on, "was in the last few days of July, 1914. My wife and I were due, I believe, to sail from Hamburg on August the second. I didn't know then that Germany was preparing for war. Hence, for a short while, I argued with the military authorities. I even tried to dodge them, and was practically arrested at Hamburg—just as I was about to step up the gang-plank."

He smiled as he thought of it. "Of course," he said, "the moment I realized the gravity of the situation—I mean the proximity of war—I threw myself heart and soul into the service of the Fatherland—as every good German should do."

"Um! A sudden and rather drastic termination of your honeymoon."

"It so happened."

"Only nineteen." General von Lichner shook his head. "Poor young girl. Very sad indeed."

Again Leutnant Boehmer shrugged. "One's country before all," he said

The general nodded. "You were, I suppose, subject to military call?"

"I'm not sure. I had, as you know, signified my intention to become an American citizen—taken out my first papers. These I produced before the military authorities. I was ashamed of myself afterwards—when I realized that Germany needed every available man."

Von Lichner twisted the ends of his moustache. "It almost sounds," he said, "as if you were compelled to remain here—against your will."

"It does sound that way. Such, however, was not the case. I promptly offered my services the day war was declared."

"And very excellent services thay have been," congratulated the general. "You have, I should think, a pretty fairly understandable grudge against us. In the circumstances of your marriage, your intended American citizenship, we might well have refused to consider your services. It occurs to me that we have repayed your patriotism with militaristic severity."

"My duty was plain."

"Your duty, in 1914, might have been to remain neutral. America was not then involved in the War, and—I should be inclined to think—to all intents and purposes you were an American citizen."

"My intended American citizenship was purely for business reasons. My heart was with my own people. How could it be otherwise?"

"Your wife," Von Lichner reminded him.

"My heart," repeated Leutnant Boehmer, listlessly, "was with my country."

THERE was a silence. To the north and south the night clouds reverberated a distant sound of guns. General von Lichner continued to study the pale, bespectacled young man dressed in the uniform of an American artillery officer. Somehow the uniform did not seem incongruous on him.

"And your country," said the general, "repaid you rather cruelly. I am," he added, "referring to the unfortunate death of your wife!"

For some moments Leutnant Boehmer didn't reply. Then he said:—

"I have never looked at it in quite that way. What animosity I might feel in connexion with her death—and I must again remind you that we hardly knew each other—is directed not against our submarine campaign, but against the United States of America.

"Had the United States remained strictly neutral—as they so often protested—had they remained entirely unbiased in keeping with that protestation, the *Lusitania* would not have been sunk and Edith would have been perfectly safe to cross on it.

"My wife," he determined, "was a sacrifice to the perfidy of her country! Her death can be laid at the steps of Washington. The United States of America permitted her—and, with her, others equally unfortunate—to take passage on a boat they knew to be carrying munitions. She was unconsciously risking her life. The least the United States could have done was to warn her of it. They let her go—to her death!"

Outwardly calm, his inward feelings had kindled his pale-blue eyes. They gleamed vindictively.

"If anything," he proceeded, "is needed to justify my hostility toward the Americans, beyond the fact that they are our enemies, perhaps these views of mine explain it."

Again the silence of the dug-out vibrated with waves of distant rumbling. From the roof a small pebble plopped down on the table, danced, and rolled off.

"What," asked Von Lichner, "was the object of your wife's crossing in 1916?"

Leutnant Boehmer made a forlorn gesture with his hand. "She had some hare-brain notion to join me in Germany."

"Then she had forgiven you?"

There was a note of surprise in General von Lichner's voice, and for a moment Leutnant Boehmer hesitated.

"She wished to be near me," he admitted, quietly.

"Did you know she had taken passage on the *Lusitania*?"

"No."

"Then how——"

"She had written and told me of her plans to cross over to England. I had tried to dissuade her from doing so."

"When did you know?"

"The passenger list included her name I never heard from her again."

The general rose and laid his hand on the young German's shoulder. "I'm sorry," he said. Straightening, he extended his hand. "Herr Leutnant, I congratulate you. Any other man might feel embittered. You have admirably succeeded in crushing any personal feelings you might have in the matter. I can only add that I hope you will be equally successful in the exploit for which you have so bravely volunteered. Good-bye—and good luck to you."

Leutnant Boehmer saluted him. It was formally returned, then the artillery general went up the dug-out steps and out into the thickening, rainy night. Some few moments later the arrival of a group of German officers signified that all was in readiness.

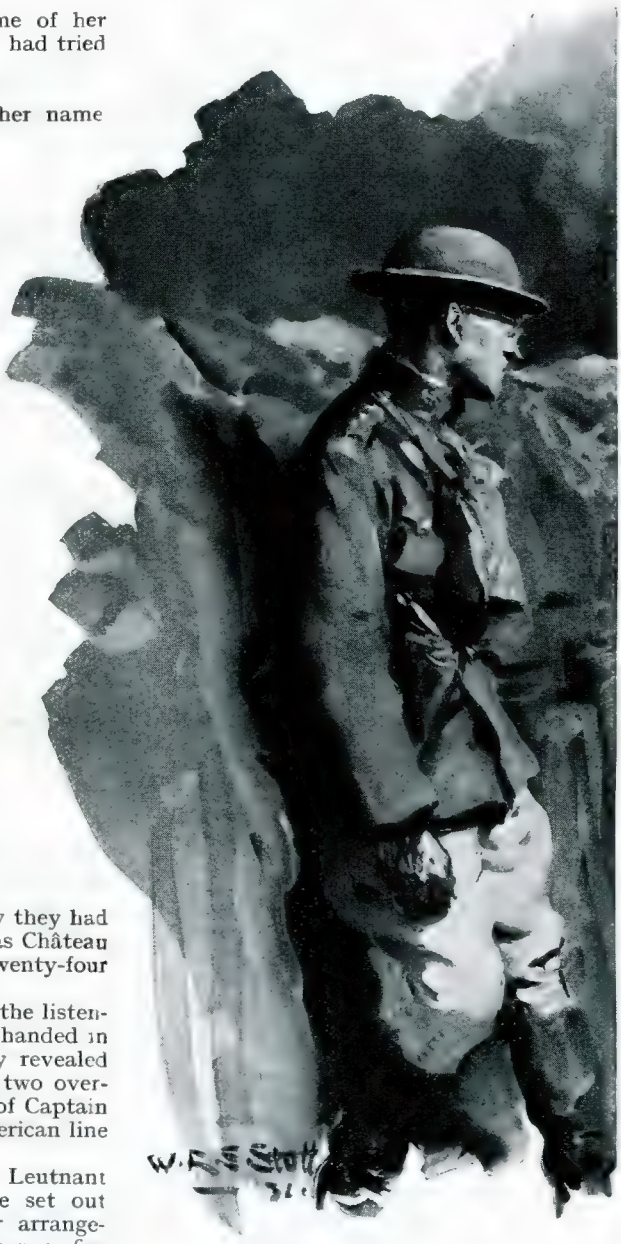
The one thing lacking was the American password. Even Leutnant Boehmer himself admitted that the want of it was a bit of a stumbling-block. The prisoners had been questioned relentlessly. All that could be got out of them was the statement that on the last day they had been in the line the password was Château Thierry. It was changed every twenty-four hours.

The one final hope had been in the listening-set reports. They had just been handed in at Corps Headquarters. All they revealed in the matter of usefulness were two overheard remarks in which the name of Captain Fairfax occurred. This in the American line directly opposite.

On receipt of this information, Leutnant Boehmer decided to risk it. He set out shortly before midnight. As per arrangement, a few bursts of machine-gun fire startled the comparative quiet and a German challenge boomed through the drizzling rain in the hope the Americans might hear it.

"*Wer da?*"

Crawling from shell hole to shell hole, under and through wire, slithering like a lizard over gas-infested slime, lying face-downward in the mud whenever an American star shell lit up the black and fetid ground,



Leutnant Boehmer crept nearer and nearer the enemy line. Two more star shells went up, and a machine-gun began coughing from the left.

Bullets were splashing up the mud around his tense body. He slithered into a small shell hole, and as he did so a bullet in his right shoulder nearly took his arm off. He could feel the warm blood running down his arm and dripping from his finger-tips.

He didn't move. For what seemed hours he remained motionless, the pain from his shoulder numbing his whole body. Finally, the scare having died down, he very slowly got at his field dressing and awkwardly, painfully, managed to put a pad over his

"I ain't forgotten the password," said the sentry, swinging round on him, bayonet poised. "And right now, captain, I'm going to ask you *what it is."*

wound, pulling his tunic tight to keep it in place. Then, his head throbbing, he squirmed onward, a few inches at a time, until, following a swift movement, he was challenged by an unseen sentry not five feet in front of him.

"Who goes there? Make it snappy or I'll——" The sentry himself was scared stiff. It was palpable in his voice.

IN that moment Leutnant Boehmer's heart stopped beating. He had to reply to that challenge, had to reply at once. And it had to be something that would prevent a bullet crashing into his skull. One brief moment, with four years' effort, hope, and waiting, all hanging in the balance. He tried to moisten his dry mouth.

"For the love of Pete!" he managed. "I've just been shot by the Germans. What's the big idea, buddy? Hasn't an American officer any friends in this war?"

He could see the sentry's white face.

"Who are you?" the man demanded.

"Captain Davis, 117th Field Battery, 27th Division. Here, help me down into that sap, will you? I've got a lame shoulder."

The white face peered forward; and behind it was a tense arm and a cocked rifle.

"Listen," said Boehmer, calmly. "Where's Captain Fairfax? I've got some very important information for him."

Then, and then only, did he sense that the sentry had relaxed.

"Captain Fairfax? Why—I guess there's a Captain Fairfax in B Company——" The sentry seemed uncertain about what he should do.

"Lend me a hand, will you, buddy. I've been pretty badly hit."

"S-sure."

Reluctantly the man propped his rifle against the parapet and helped the officer down.

"Fine," said Leutnant Boehmer; then groaned. "Thank God that's over." He slumped back against the wall of the sap. In the dark, the sentry was wiping the blood off his own hand, wiping it on his blouse.

"Gosh!" he said, "your arm's covered with blood. How'd it happen?"

"German sniper. Now, listen," he said more sharply. "Don't pay any attention to me. Grab that rifle and keep an eye peeled. Just answer my questions as I put them to you. I lost my way out there, I guess. Now where does this sap lead to?"

"Front-line trench."

"Which way do I turn for the battalion quarters?"

"Left, till you come to a kind of communication trench, then along that a little ways and bend to the right. The battalion dug-out is about fifty feet from the bend."

"O.K. What's your name, soldier?"

"O'Reilly, sir."

"O'Reilly, eh? What part of the States"—here, Leutnant Boehmer, as he attempted to rise, moaned with pain.

"Watertown, New York, sir."

"Watertown, eh? An upstate boy. A hill-billy?"

"I ain't no hill-billy," the sentry answered.

Instantly Leutnant Boehmer sensed that he had said the wrong thing there. Quickly he attempted to right it.

"A hick, then," he amended. "A hick because you failed to challenge me correctly. How do you know who I am? I might be a German spy masquerading as an American officer for all you know."

"That's O.K. I took a good look at you before I——"

"Why didn't you ask me for the password?"

The man had nothing to say.

"The trouble is," continued Leutnant Boehmer, "we trust hicks like you in an important forward position, tell you just what to do—and then you go to sleep on the job. I shouldn't be surprised if you've forgotten the password."

"I ain't forgotten it." The boy swung round on him, bayonet poised. "And right now, captain, I'm going to ask *you* what it is!"

Again, for a crucial moment, all Leutnant Boehmer's plans, a four years' patience, hung on his answer. Very quietly he laughed.

"No, O'Reilly," he said, "you can't bluff me out that way. I'm going to report you to Captain Fairfax. Report you for forgetting the password."

The bayonet was lowered.

"I ain't forgot it."

"Then you should have demanded it from me—in the first place."

"I seed you was an American officer all right."

"That's no excuse. You should have challenged me for the password. There can be only one reason why you didn't do so, and that is because you——"

"Boston," said the sentry.

For a while Leutnant Boehmer considered the word. It might be a trap. In the dark he intuitively judged that the boy wasn't smart enough to attempt a trick like that. He committed himself into accepting it.

"Right," he said. "But I'm forced to report you all the same."

"Go right ahead," said the boy. "Cut me out of a leave I got due—to-morrow morning. Me and a couple of buddies had it all planned to visit Paris."

Leutnant Boehmer opened his glazed eyes. "You have a sentry up at one of your listening posts," he said. "He gave me your password for the asking. He ought to be disciplined."

"Paris, eh?" Leutnant Boehmer shook his head. To-morrow morning at five the boy would find himself in the midst of an inferno of high explosive, slightly more dangerous to his welfare than anything Paris had to offer. "To-morrow will be too late for you, anyway," he said. "Good-night, O'Reilly."

The sentry didn't reply.

Boehmer went down the sap and turned left in the front-line trench, lurching heavily against the wall.

"Halt!" came a voice. "Who goes there?"

"Friend."

"Advance friend—and give the password."

"Boston."

"O.K., kid. Oh! beg pardon, sir. I didn't know you was an officer."

"That's all right."

Leutnant Boehmer chuckled. A few more moments and he would be in contact with American Intelligence, his active participation in the War definitely over. He plowed on, ankle deep in the mud of the ink-black trench. He had no thought of making a secret round of the American position. He didn't care a hoop where they had their machine-gun emplacements, their batteries, their ammunition supply. He only hoped they would give a good account of themselves at five o'clock in the morning.

If the Imperial Staff of the 11th German Army could have known just why Leutnant Boehmer was chuckling, they would have stiffened with consternation and surprise. Then as soon as they had recovered their senses they would have frantically telephoned their battery commanders and ordered them to open up and pour hell into the enemy on the instant, regardless of plans for to-morrow's big attack; with a fervent prayer—in good round German oaths—that one of their shells might conveniently blow Leutnant Boehmer's head off.

Reaching the battalion dug-out, Boehmer at once addressed himself to the senior officer. What he had to say was startling.

"Get through to G.H.Q. immediately. Your position here must be reinforced without delay. The position of all your batteries and machine-gun emplacements are marked to a fraction of an inch. At five o'clock the Germans are going to launch a terrific attack in full strength."

They were stupefied and incredulous, but when Leutnant Boehmer was able to prove his statements, the wires began to hum.

"My name," he went on, "is Lothar Boehmer. For the last four years I've been attached to German Intelligence in Berlin and Coblenz. I was half-way to becoming an American citizen before the War started—but they kept me in Berlin, and I couldn't get away."

His pale, strained face was terribly in earnest. In the excitement, nobody seemed to notice that he was wounded. He swayed and would have fallen except for the aid of friendly hands.

"All this time I've waited to get even with them. I wanted to bring over some information that would be valuable to you. I think," he said, faintly, "you'll agree with me that I've done so."

In the next ten minutes the whole American front was in feverish and secret activity, troops being rushed up, positions of batteries and machine-guns changed. It was planned to forestall the attack with a heavy barrage.

On his stretcher, preparatory to being taken to a hospital, Leutnant Boehmer opened his glazed eyes.

"You have a sentry up at one of your listening-posts. His name is O'Reilly. He gave me your password for the asking. He ought to be disciplined."

The commanding officer looked at him. "I know the boy," he said, gravely. "It just so happens that I've cited him for bravery. I'm sorry you feel bound to report him."

"Yes," breathed Boehmer. "He ought to have shot me. With the result," he added, "that to-morrow morning at five you'd have lost thousands of your men. Therefore, if you think well of his negligence, you might let him leave for Paris before things begin to hum. And give him enough money to blow himself to a good time."

THAT really is all about Leutnant Boehmer. But, in one of the departments in Washington there is a man who bears an astonishing likeness to him. He wears no war decoration of any kind. This is perhaps advisable; as also is an assumed name. For, although the War is over and old hatreds forgotten, there may yet be certain individuals in the United States ready and willing to make things very unpleasant for him—once his identity was truly established.

He is older, of course. A quiet, unassuming man, his hair a sandy grey, his pale-blue eyes still adorned by glasses. He leads a lonely life, living in a small room in which the one conspicuous and somewhat incongruous object is the photograph of a young girl.

Across the bottom of it is written: "To Lothar, my husband, with all my love. Edith."

On the back you may find the following:—

"My dear wife. Killed, May, 1916. Avenged, September, 1918."

Children's Drawings

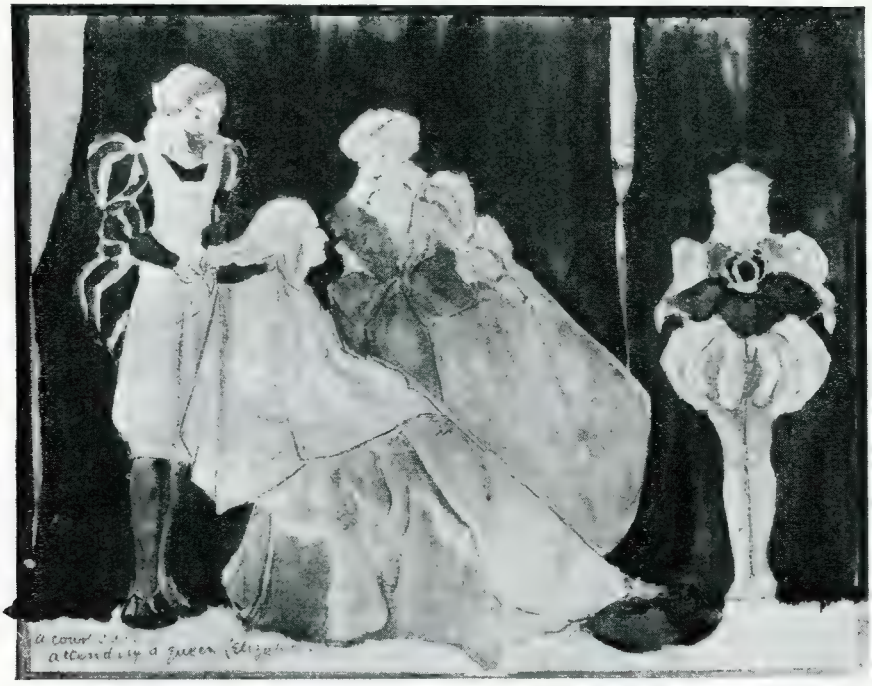
"Seen at Tennis," a clever action study by a child aged thirteen.

IT is not out of the mouths only of babes and sucklings that wisdom finds means of utterance. Shrewd as may be the things which children occasionally say, there are times when we are equally astonished by the quickness of their eyes to perceive, and by the precocious dexterity of their little hands to do. Now the drawings which a child makes for its own pleasure constitute a very good index to its powers of perception. It may be as well to remark right at the beginning that drawings, however good, made by a child at an early age, do not necessarily mean that it has a genuine artistic talent that can be fruitfully developed as its grows older.

A very large number of children reveal what seem to be quite extraordinary powers of drawing in certain directions, powers which owe nothing to teaching, but appear to come instinctively. But these particular powers usually wane as the child grows older and becomes more self-conscious and sophisticated. Some years ago exhaustive inquiry was made concerning the drawings of children belonging to a number of different nations, and close examination revealed that in all countries the rule held good that, up to a certain age, usually about the early 'teens, a child maintained and even increased these instinctive powers of drawing, but after that age the drawings tend

By

FRANK RUTTER



"Court Barber Attending a Queen," an examination sketch in watercolour, drawn in two hours and a half by Margaret J. Higginson, aged eighteen.

to deteriorate in vitality. For this deterioration there is a very good explanation that will be given later.

Most of us are suspicious of child prodigies, and rightly so, because they usually disappoint us sadly in their adult performances. Nevertheless, we must not shut our eyes to the fact that there are exceptions. Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A., was a child prodigy who earned money in his 'teens by the excellence of his portrait drawings in chalks. Millais was another prodigy who also lived to become President of the Royal Academy. But these are only the exceptions which prove the rule. Further, if we examine the very early drawings of Lawrence and Millais we shall find that the qualities they possess are rather different from those which distinguish the spontaneous drawings of untrained childhood.

It is time that some attempt was made to define those instinctive powers of drawing which seem peculiar to childhood. Speaking generally, it may be said that what distinguishes a typical child's drawing from the average adult drawing is that the first is a drawing of a mental conception, while the second is an attempt to render directly from Nature the appearance of persons or places. The best drawings done by children are nearly always drawings done from memory, and the points in which they excel are not so much accuracy of objective representation as the vital suggestion of action and movement.

Memory drawing is now recognized by educational authorities to play a very important part in training the young to observe, and its practice has become a part of the general education given in schools. In this connection acknowledgment must be made of the admirable work done by the Royal Drawing Society, which was founded nearly forty years ago, not only for the encouragement of drawing, but also for "preserving and developing spontaneous pictorial drawing, painting and modelling from memory by young people." The annual exhibitions of this society, held at the Guildhall, London, always contain a number of astonishing drawings made by quite young children, and from its exhibitions are taken the drawings which illustrate this article. While there may be

other qualities of a high order which distinguish the drawings done by the older exhibitors, it will be generally agreed, I think, that in all these exhibitions it is the work of quite young children that most astounds us in its remarkable expression of action and movement.

Take, for example, the drawing of "A Girl Skipping," done by a twelve-year-old girl, R. S. C. Mann, of Greencroft School, Bexhill. A captious critic might observe that the upper part of the body is not drawn so correctly as it might have been, but the most exacting will be compelled to admit the convincing suggestion of movement in the rope, in the flapping of the skirt, in the lifting of the feet. And this convincing rendering of movement, which is acquired so hardly and with so much difficulty by the adult artist, comes without any effort to innumerable children.

Again, look at the drawing called "Seen at Tennis," by E. Despard, aged thirteen, of St. Dunstan's Abbey, Plymouth. How spirited is the life and action in this little girl. Not only do we feel that the ball really is moving through the air, but some-

"A Girl Skipping," by R. S. C. Mann, aged twelve.

"Circus Scene," by C. Noel Buxton, aged twelve, a triumphant depiction of the impossible.

"Work Again," by the late Brian Hatton, at the age of ten; a drawing of remarkable ability.

how or other the young artist has succeeded in suggesting even the direction in which the ball is going, towards the child. All that any adult has to do in order to recognize the remarkable nature of this achievement is himself to set out deliberately to make a drawing showing the direction in which a ball is going! Even if he succeeds I very much doubt if he will be able to accomplish his purpose with the simplicity and economy of means employed by the child artist.

Shall I be misunderstood if I say that one of the delightful things about children's drawings is that they don't allow themselves to be bothered too much about facts? They may often fail in rendering the Letter, but, on the other hand, again and again they beat the adult in expressing the Spirit. When we look at the "Circus Scene,"

"Ponies Stampeding," another drawing by Brian Hatton, at the age of ten.

drawn by C. Noel Buxton, aged twelve and a half, it is easy enough to say that no human being could stride four horses abreast, as this remarkable circus performer appears to be doing. But it is not so easy to depict the action and movement of the horses with the animation this boy has done. If we allow that life and movement are bigger facts than the span of a man's legs, then surely the child may be congratulated on having got the big facts right.

Horses are very favourite subjects with child artists, who, beside suggesting their movement, often depict their form with wonderful fidelity. An excellent example is the snapshot drawing, "Seen on Ascension Day," by D. Olliver, aged fourteen, which was used in the Exhibition Catalogue of the Royal Drawing Society last April. In addition to the realism of the horses, this drawing is particularly attractive by reason of the natural gestures of the child riders.

By way of comparison we may contrast

"Seen on Ascension Day," by D. Olliver, aged fourteen, in which the natural gestures of the child riders are particularly attractive.

these drawings with a work of quite another character made by an older artist. "Court Barber attending a Queen," by Margaret J. Higginson, aged eighteen, is a watercolour originally made as an Examination Sketch (two and a half hours) at Loughton High School, and afterwards reproduced on the cover of the Royal Drawing Society's Magazine last year (1930). Perhaps it is unfair to compare this deliberate composition study with memory drawings and studies from Nature; but it will be apparent that it is a much more sophisticated production. It shows a nice sense of design in its use of the diagonal line, and the lady-in-waiting is particularly well drawn, but generally it has not that inspiration and sense of life and movement that we find in the work of the younger children.

When we consider the maximum of expression obtained through a minimum of means by some of these very young children, we begin to understand just why it was that the celebrated French artist Monsieur Henri Matisse once said in all seriousness that he wished he could draw like a child of five. Indeed, he would be a rash man who said at what age a child begins to observe external phenomena and finds means to express its rudimentary perceptions with a pencil. I remember seeing at the Royal Drawing Society a scrawl of a windmill which was said to have been done by a child little over two years old, and even then an attempt had been made to chronicle that the mill had sails!

To a great extent children's drawings, such as those already mentioned, may be taken as indicating general intelligence and alertness of perception rather than any specific and decided aptitude for the artist's vocation. A good deal more than a general vitality and a lively sense of action and movement is needed before we are justified in seeing in the child the promise of a future artist. For examples of drawings made by a child with altogether exceptional powers we cannot do better than turn to some of the early works of the late Brian Hatton, who certainly was the most highly gifted child artist that even the Royal Drawing Society has ever had.

At the age of eight Hatton gained the bronze medal of the Royal Drawing Society, and also a prize offered by the Art for Schools Association. At the age of ten he won the Gold Cross, given and designed by Princess Louise, with a set of four drawings, studies from Nature of sheep and horses. One of these, "Work Again," here reproduced, is remarkable not only for the most sensitive drawing of the horse in the foreground, but also for the amazing way in which the young artist lightly indicated

"Claude and Christine Morris," an example of Brian Hatton's maturer work.

"Carting Sand on the Shore near Swansea," a memory drawing which won Brian Hatton the G. F. Watts Prize at the age of thirteen.

the recession of the field and the sense of air and light in the distance. Still more amazing in its rendering of rapid movement and expression of animal character is another pencil drawing, done in the same year (1897), of "Ponies Stampeding." It is almost incredible that so masterly a drawing should have been executed by a boy of ten.

In this one matter of the expression of rapid movement Hatton never did anything better in his later years than this precocious drawing of "Ponies Stampeding." But he preserved a great deal more of the spirit of life and action than most child artists do when they begin to pay more attention to objective representation. For the deterioration in children's drawings generally comes about when, in the desire to render details more accurately, they lose sight of the whole in their concentration on the parts.

Brian Hatton never allowed himself to fall into this error, but as he became more realistic he did not "let himself go" quite so freely as he had done in his earlier work. There is a certain sense of reserve, though there is still a fine feeling for movement, in his remarkable watercolour, "Carting Sand on the Shore near Swansea." This memory drawing from Nature, done at the age of thirteen, won the G. F. Watts Prize at the Royal Drawing Society in 1900, and it shows a maturity and polished completeness that an artist of twice his age might have envied. The modelling of the forms of the horses has been pushed further than in any of the earlier drawings, while the rendering of the ground and distance is again admirable in its subtle simplicity.

How Brian Hatton's art would eventually have developed no man can say, for, unhappily, he was killed in action in 1916. The work that he did as a young man just before the War may not be so arresting as the drawings he made in his childhood, but it was eminently sound, capable, and scholarly. His equestrian portrait group of "Claude and Christine Morris" suggests that he might have been another Charles Wellington Furse. But it is idle to speculate, and the one thing certain is that Brian Hatton was undoubtedly one of the most gifted child-artists that England has ever seen. Had he lived he might have been one more exception to the rule about child prodigies.

A BULLDOG DRUMMOND STORY.

THE MYSTERY OF THE STUDIO

By

"SAPPER"

Illustrated by A. R. THOMSON

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Bulldog Drummond and his friends, Ted Jerningham and Peter Darrell, are disturbed by the mysterious disappearance of young Bob Marton, who has been chased through the fog into Jerningham's Devonshire home by two warders who mistook him for an escaped murderer. Marton, who is a member of a firm of solicitors, Marton, Peters and Newall, had confessed that he was in some terrible predicament which involved a Comtessa Bartelozzi, and Drummond and his friends go to Glensham House nearby, which they know to have been his destination. There they find Morris, the escaped murderer, wearing Marton's clothes and babbling about the ghost of a woman who, he says, gave him the clothes. Next they discover Marton's dead body. Morris escapes into the fog and is drowned in Grimstone Mire. An American named Hardcastle, who has recently leased the house, arrives with two companions, Slingsby and Penton. Drummond suspects Hardcastle of being conencted with the murder, and with Jerningham and Darrell returns to Jerningham's house to 'phone the police, whose arrival they are still awaiting when the Comtessa Bartelozzi, who is Hardcastle's daughter, seeks shelter from the fog. With them and the police she returns to Glensham House and retires to bed. Jerningham is acquainted with a member of Marton's firm, Dick Newall, and Drummond decides to return to London after the inquest to see whether Newall can throw any light on the case. They travel with the Comtessa, whom Drummond promises to see again. She drives away from the station with a woman Drummond recognizes as the notorious Irma Peterson.

DRUMMOND, Darrell, and Jerningham drove to Ted Jerningham's club, and one of the first members they met in the smoking-room was Dick Newall. He was reading an evening paper, and the instant he saw them he gave a hail.

"Ted, old lad, come here. Fancy you being mixed up in this performance."

"Evening, Dick," said Jerningham. "I want you to meet Drummond and Darrell."

"The three musketeers complete," grinned the other, and then grew serious again. "It's a pretty damnable business, isn't it? I suppose this account is accurate?"

Drummond, who had skimmed through the report, nodded

"Is there any spot that we can go to, Ted," he said, "where there will be no chance of our being overheard?"

"The small card room is bound to be empty," answered Jerningham.

Drummond led the way to the lift, and the others followed with Newall. And, having ordered a round of the necessary, Newall closed the door.

"Now we sha'n't be disturbed," he said. "Get on with it, Hugh."

"Right-o!" answered Drummond. "That story, Newall, as given in the paper, is a lie from beginning to end."

"What on earth do you mean?" cried Newall. "You aren't telling me that Bob Marton is still alive, are you?"

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"No—not that. What I am telling you is that he was not murdered by Morris, the escaped convict."

"Then whom was he murdered by?"

"Before we go into that, have I your word that what we're going to tell you won't go any further?"

"Yes," said Newall, "you have."

"Good. Then Marton was murdered by one of the trio Hardcastle, Slingsby, and Penton—or by all of them."

"My dear sir," stuttered Newall, "you're pulling my leg. What under the sun should they want to murder Marton for?"

"That," said Drummond, with a faint smile, "is where we hope you'll be able to help us."

Briefly, but at the same time omitting nothing, Drummond gave Newall the story, and the lawyer listened with increasing amazement. But at the end he shook his head.

"Sorry," he said, "but I fear you haven't convinced my legal mind. It's quite clear that you believed the yarn this convict spun to you; but what I'm asking myself, in view of the well-nigh inconceivable alternative you suggest, is whether you weren't deceived by him yourselves."

"I expected you to say that," said Drummond, quietly. "And it was the realization that everybody would think that, that made us say nothing about it. *Nevertheless, Morris did not deceive us: what he said was the truth.*"

"But, damn it, man," cried Newall, "what possible motive could there have been for such a thing? Hardcastle, a perfectly good American millionaire—why should he want to put Bob Marton out of the way? It's preposterous."

"There is no important document, or something of that sort missing from the office, is there?"

"Nothing; nothing at all. Why, as far as I know, there isn't a document in the office that is worth a tanner to anyone else."

"One question, though, Newall," said Drummond. "However much we imagined over what Morris said to us, there is no doubt about Marton's remarks to me. How do you account for those? Who are the 'they' he was terrified of?"

"I confess that defeats me," said the lawyer, slowly. "Of course, he was in a rotten condition of nerves."

"Rotten enough to imagine some non-existent beings?"

Dick Newall lit a cigarette thoughtfully.

"It's a poser, I admit," he remarked. "You say he mentioned this woman, Comtessa Bartelozzi, by name?"

"Certainly," said Drummond. "He mentioned her in connexion with his trouble, and she is Hardcastle's daughter."

"What is she like to look at?"

"Extraordinarily attractive. If you happen to frequent a night club called the Custard Pot you may have seen her there."

"What's that?" cried the other. "The Custard Pot! Why, she must be the woman I saw there with Bob Marton one night. I pulled his leg about it next day."

"Had Hardcastle been to your firm then?"

Newall stared at him.

"Yes, he had. Hardcastle came to us about two months ago, and this incident I'm talking about was last week."

"Seems strange that Marton didn't tell you who the lady was," said Drummond. "Look here, Newall," he went on, quietly. "I know our story must seem a bit thin to you. For all that, it's the truth. Young Marton was foully murdered by Hardcastle and his bunch. There is some big crime in contemplation. What it is I know no more than you. But Marton knew, and that's why they outed him."

A WAITER entered, and came up to Newall.

"You're wanted on the telephone, sir," he announced.

"I'll come back at once," said the lawyer, rising.

He followed the man from the room, and soon returned with a worried expression on his face.

"It's a very strange thing," he said, "in view of what we've been talking about, but my uncle has just rung me up. And quite obviously something is wrong. I'm going round to see him at once. Will you fellows be dining here?"

"They can feed with me," said Jerningham.

"Right. I'll come back as soon as I've seen the old man."

He left the room, and Drummond rubbed his hands together.

"I wonder if that means we're on the track of something?" he said.

There was no sign of Newall during dinner, and it was not until after ten that he came into the smoking-room. A glance at his face showed that something had happened.

"It is my turn now," he said, "to ask you to promise that you won't pass on what I'm going to tell you."

"You have it," answered Drummond.

"Whether I ought to say anything about it at all is doubtful," went on Newall, "because as far as I can see it has no connexion with Bob Marton's death. At the same time, it may interest you to know that five thousand pounds' worth of

bearer bonds, which were deposited with us a little while ago by a client, are missing. They should have been in his father's safe—a safe to which Bob had access—and their loss only became known to my uncle to-day when he was going through the contents. At first he thought old Marton might have taken them down to his house in Surbiton, though it would have been a very unusual proceeding. And so he went down there himself this afternoon to see if he could find them. A particular reason for the haste is that the client who left them with us is now back in London, and she may want them at any moment. Well, they've gone—vanished completely. And since the bare idea of suspecting old Marton is simply laughable, I'm sorry to say that it looks as if it was proof of what you were saying about young Bob. There's no one else who can have taken the damned things. As you can appreciate, it's a most unpleasant thing for the firm, for though our client will suffer no financial loss—we shall naturally ante up the five thousand—yet she may cut up nasty. You know what women are in matters of that sort—especially foreigners."

DRUMMOND leaned forward suddenly. "Newall," he said, quietly, "I'm going to ask you a question which you may think gross impertinence. What is the name of this client?"

"That I'm afraid I can't tell you," answered the other. "It can have no possible bearing on the matter, can it?"

"Then I will draw a bow at a venture," continued Drummond. "Is it by any chance Madame Saumur?"

The lawyer started and stared at him.

"I see that it is," said Drummond, quietly.

"But do you know her?" cried Newall.

"Do we know her?" Drummond laughed gently. "Yes, Newall, we do, though not under that name. And you can take it from me that she is one of the most dangerous criminals alive to-day. And to complete the circle, so to speak, when the Comtessa Bartelozzi arrived at Paddington this afternoon, Madame Saumur was there to meet her. And it was that fact that made me ask you."

"Well, I'll be damned," said Newall. "Confound it—are all our clients criminals?"

"You can take it from me that the Saumur-Hardcastle combination don't waste their time in a Sunday school," grinned Drummond.

"We must get the police on to them!" cried the lawyer.

"And what are you going to say to the police?" demanded Drummond. "That some member of your firm, now dead, has embezzled five thousand quid! Guess again, boy. This is a show in which we've got to act on our own. And at the moment we're simply blundering about blindly in the dark. What is the motive underlying the whole affair? That's what we've got to try to get at. What is all this leading up to?"

"But you surely don't mean to imply that there is any connexion between Bob Marton's murder and the deposit of those bearer bonds?" said Newall, incredulously.

"It does sound a bit far-fetched, doesn't it?" admitted Drummond. "And yet they're all in the same bunch. Don't forget that fact. What sort of reason did she give for leaving them with you?"

"I couldn't say," answered the other. "Her interview was with old Marton. I could find out, of course, quite easily, from his confidential clerk. But anyway, Drummond, you can't expect me to believe that she left them with us in order that they should be stolen."

"That is exactly what I do believe," said Drummond, calmly. "For that reason and no other. Further, she intended that they should be stolen by young Marton and no one else."

"But it sounds fantastic," cried Newall. "Surely it is a somewhat novel trait in a criminal to set about being robbed?"

"She knew she would never lose her money," said Drummond. "What have you just said yourself!—the firm is going to make it up to her."

"Then what was the great idea?" said the other, feebly.

"The great idea was to get Marton in their power," answered Drummond. "Why—I haven't a notion, but that was the scheme. And it succeeded. He was in their power, and then when he'd done what they told him to do, they got rid of him."

He lit a cigarette; then he leaned forward and tapped Newall on the knee.

"Look here, old lad," he said, "you've got to get one fact wedged in the legal brain. And you've got to readjust your ideas from a new standpoint. Leave out for the moment Hardcastle and his crowd; assume if you will that we are mistaken there. But with regard to Madame Saumur, as she now calls herself, you've *got* to believe us. She is a criminal of the first order—a woman without mercy or scruple. And so get that into your head as a fact and not as surmise, and start from the beginning again."

"We can bear out every word of that, Dick," put in Jerningham.

"Right-o!" said the lawyer, resignedly. "I'll take your word for it."

"Good," cried Drummond. "Then let's start off by trying to get some sort of

"Look here," said Drummond, "you've got to believe us. That woman is a criminal of the first order —a woman without mercy or scruple."

chronological order. First of all—do you know when young Marton first met this Bartelozzi woman ? "

Newall shook his head.

" I'm afraid I don't," he said. " The only time I saw 'em together, as I told you, was last week." And then he paused suddenly. " By Jove ! I wonder ? "

He closed his eyes as if trying to collect his thoughts.

" Wait a moment, you fellows," he said. " I'll get it shortly."

He pulled his note-book out of his pocket, and studied it

" Now this is not proof : it's not even evidence, but it's a possibility. On April 15th, Bob Marton had a job of work given him to do in Liverpool, which entailed his being away for the night. He came to me the day before and asked me if I'd take it on for him, and when I asked him why, he told me that the most glorious woman he had ever seen in his life had got a date with him on the fifteenth. He said that if he didn't

appear she'd get fed up, and, anyway, he was so darned serious about it that I said I would. Here's the entry in my diary—Liverpool, Baxter and Co., on the fifteenth. Furthermore, though on this point I've got to trust my memory, it was about then that he started talking about the Custard Pot. Well, you say this woman goes there a lot, so it is possible that that is when he met her."

"Which would make it about four months ago," said Drummond. "And Hardcastle came to you about two months after?"

Newall turned over the pages of his notebook.

"The first entry of him I have is on June 29th," he answered. "But old Marton did his business, and so it is quite on the cards he came earlier."

"When were the bonds deposited?"

"I couldn't say off hand, but that, again, I can find out from Merridew, the confidential clerk, to-morrow."

"But it was fairly recently?"

"If I had to guess I should say it was some time in July."

"Therefore after Marton had met Comtessa Bartelozzi."

"If our surmise about April 15th is correct—yes. But, remember, that is only surmise. The only proof we have there is that I saw 'em together a week ago."

"Were they pretty matey?"

"Taking it by and large—yes."

"So presumably it was not their first meeting?"

"If it was, rapidity must have been the order of the evening," said Newall.

"Now look here, old boy," went on Drummond, "that's another point that strikes me. The poor devil is dead, so that's that, but frankly, what did you think of Marton? I only saw him for about ten minutes, but not to mince words, I didn't put him very high in the handicap."

"He wasn't a bad fellow," answered the other. "Why do you ask?"

"For this reason. The Bartelozzi woman, as far as looks are concerned, at any rate, is a winner. Then why does she select Marton?"

"I get you," said Newall, thoughtfully. "And there's a good deal in what you say. You mean, it points to an ulterior motive?"

"Of course it does. He may not have been a bad fellow, but my dear old lad, if you were a damned pretty woman, would you have selected him as your boy friend?"

"I suppose you're right," agreed Newall. "But the thing that stumps me is what that ulterior motive can possibly have been. We're back at the beginning again. Assuming that everything you say is true; assuming that the bonds were deposited with us and he was goaded into stealing 'em—what then? What earthly use can the junior member of a firm of respectable solicitors be to a bunch of crooks?"

"There you have me," said Drummond. "But I can't help thinking that when you go more carefully through the papers belonging to his father, you'll find that something very important is missing. Our Bartelozzi having fleeced him good and hearty, by some means or other lets him know that she is fully aware of the bond transaction. Possibly she pitched him some yarn about them having been stolen from her. Anyhow, the poor sap pinches them. Then he's in the soup. The lady ceases to be kind, and puts the screw on. As a price of her silence, he's got to get the other thing."

"My dear fellow," cried Newall, "your theory would be admirable if I could even remotely begin to imagine what this other thing can be."

"We'll find out in time," answered Drummond, quietly. "You can put your shirt on that. But for the moment let's go on to Hardcastle. What was the business that brought him to you in the first instance?"

"The lease of Glensham House. And subsequently we put through some negotiations for him with regard to a studio, down in Essex, which was empty. It belonged to a film company that went bust, and he wanted to carry out some experiments there."

"Where exactly is it?"

"A few miles from Colchester on the main London road. Not far from the Tiptree jam works. It's called the Blackwater studio." And then he began to laugh. "Do you anticipate villainy there?"

"I'd anticipate it in Canterbury Cathedral if that bunch was around," said Drummond, grimly. "And so will you, old lad, by the time we've finished."

Newall rose with a smile.

"In which case I'd better fortify myself for it with some sleep. The old man wants me at the office at crack of dawn to-morrow, so I'll push off. And if you all want to make your wills the firm might make a reduction for numbers."

WITH a cheery wave he was gone, and Drummond grinned.

"That lad is going to get an eye-opener before he's much older," he remarked. "Though I must admit he's got lots of excuse for being sceptical. The whole thing is damned obscure at the moment."

And the obscurity did not diminish during the next few days. It transpired that the bonds had been deposited on July 13th as cover for a deal in land which Madame Saumur was trying to put through. As she

What a superb actress she was! For a moment Bulldog Drummond was tempted to tell her exactly what he was hinting at.

was going abroad for a few weeks, she wanted someone on the spot to act for her, and, instead of giving them the money, she preferred to leave the bearer bonds, with instructions to sell should the transactions come to anything.

"All perfectly normal and in order," said Newall. "What was the good of selling out if the deal came to nothing?"

"Who put her on to your firm particularly?" demanded Drummond.

"Was there ever such a man?" laughed Newall. "If you must know, it was the Dean of Murchester's wife, whom she met at Mentone."

Further, as the result of an exhaustive search, the only thing discovered missing from the office was a sixpenny postal order.

"Honestly, Drummond," said Newall, "I'm convinced you're barking up the wrong tree. Whatever the lady may have been in the past, there is nothing about this transaction which isn't absolutely straightforward. And it seems to me that there is a perfectly simple solution. Bob, the silly young ass, got tied up with the Bartelozzi woman, who, perhaps without meaning to, bled him. She is probably a lady with expensive tastes, who expects money to be poured out like water on her. And he, finding he couldn't stand the pace, stole the bonds. He has access to his father's safe; for all I know he may have been present at the interview. There are a dozen ways in which he could have found out the bonds were there—quite normal ways. So why assume some dark conspiracy? And then, realizing what he had done—presumably he sold 'em—his nerves went. He knew that, sooner or later, his father must find out. It wasn't as if it had been money, which conceivably he might have replaced. With bonds, the position was hopeless. And that undoubtedly explains his remarks to you. He has always drunk a good deal more than was good for him, which didn't help matters, and that contributed to his condition of funk. By 'they,' he meant the police, and in the fog he must have thought the warders were policemen. And when he said it wasn't only a question of money, or that it was worse than that, he had in his mind that he had stolen bonds."

"You think, then," said Drummond, "that the verdict at the inquest was correct, and that Morris murdered him?"

"Frankly, old boy, I do," answered Newall. "You were so in earnest about it, and so positive, that to start with you almost convinced me. But now that we find that nothing else has been stolen, the utter pointlessness of the crime is what I can't get over. No. Now that we have a reasonable explanation for his agitation with you—which was the inexplicable thing before—I definitely accept the verdict."

And, for a while, Hugh Drummond himself was shaken. It was the insuperable question of motive that defeated him. Of course, it was possible that Marton had found out that they were plotting some crime, and had threatened to give them away. Then why the bearer bonds? How did they fit in? Could it be that he had made a howling blunder, and that everything was genuine from beginning to end? That the deal in land was a *bonâ-fide* one; that it was merely a common or garden case of stealing money; and that Morris was the murderer after all? His reason answered yes: every instinct he possessed said no.

He had not yet heard from the Comtessa, nor had he rung her up, and the day following his last talk with Newall he came to a decision. He would ask her to go with him to the Custard Pot that night, and there he would settle things one way or the other. He would carry the war into the enemy's country by pretending he knew a great deal more than he did.

THE COMTESSA was at home when he rang up, and came to the telephone herself.

"I was afraid you'd quite forgotten me," she said. "I shall be delighted to come. I'm going to a play, so shall I meet you there at half-past eleven?"

"Excellent," he said. "Until then—*au revoir*."

He went back to the smoking-room, to find that Peter Darrell had arrived.

"I say, Hugh," he sang out, "it was Blackwater studio, wasn't it, that Hardcastle took?"

"That's right, Peter. Why?"

"Look at this advertisement in *Film Echoes*."

He held out the paper to Drummond.

"Blackwater Studio. Actor required for small but important character part. Must be young, clean-shaven, fair, six feet tall, and between thirty-eight and forty inches round the chest. Previous experience desirable but not essential. Applicants will be interviewed in person at the studio every day between ten and six."

"That looks as if the interest in the film business was genuine enough," said Drummond, handing the paper back. "'Pon my soul, chaps, if it wasn't for our one and only Irma being mixed up in it, I'd almost be inclined to believe that the whole thing is a mare's nest."

"I thought I'd apply myself," said Darrell. "I comply with all the requirements,

and it gives one an excuse for having a look round."

"Not a bad idea, Peter. Go down to-morrow. I don't suppose they will take you for a moment, but you might spot something."

"I hear you're fixing a date with Pansy-face for to-night?"

"Yes: we're meeting at the Custard Pot." Drummond shrugged his shoulders. "The Lord knows if it will lead anywhere, but one might be able to bluff her into saying something incriminating. So long, fellows. We might both come down with you to-morrow, Peter, to the studio."

He lounged out of the room, and hailing a taxi, drove back to the service flat he was occupying during his wife's absence in America. Ever since he had met Irma at Paddington he had been conscious of a feeling of profound relief that Phyllis was out of harm's way. But this time if Madame Saumur—to give her her present title—struck, she could not do it through Phyllis. It would have to be direct at him. And when, at eleven-thirty exactly, he passed through the swing doors of the Custard Pot he was conscious of a feeling of exhilaration, of expectancy, like the hunter who hears hounds in the distance. Gone were all the doubts engendered by Dick Newall. He *knew* there was some game afoot. And it would not be for want of trying if he didn't play.

THE club was typical of a score of others. After a small formality at the office, which cost him a pound, he duly became a member, and passing up a flight of stairs he entered the dancing room. The Comtessa, he had been told below, had not yet arrived, but on informing the head waiter he was expecting her he was at once shown to a special table in the corner.

The room was tastefully got up for a place of the type. It was small, but not too hot, and the lighting was soft and restful to the eyes. On a microscopic expanse of floor in the centre three couples were dancing to the music of a small band sitting in a balcony half way up one wall.

The place was full; in fact, he had been shown to the last available table. And he realized the Comtessa must have telephoned through instructions that it was to be kept for her. The flowers, he noticed, were special ones. Evidently the lady was something of a noise in the place.

His eyes travelled round the assembled company, but he saw no one whom he knew. The usual pairs; two or three parties of four. Suddenly there came a little buzz of interest and Drummond glanced towards the door. The Comtessa had arrived. Escorted by an obsequious head waiter she was crossing the room towards him, and he rose with a bow. The eyes of most people present followed her as she moved, and Drummond admitted to himself that an evening frock turned her into a ravishing beauty.

"My dear Comtessa," he murmured, bending over her hand, "forgive my British bluntness, but you are superb."

"British bluntness, *mon ami*," she answered with a dazzling smile, "is often preferable to continental diplomacy."

"I left the question of food until you arrived," he said. "What about some caviare?"

"I adore it," she answered. "Just that, and nothing else."

He gave the necessary order; then he turned to his companion.

"Would you care to dance now, afterwards, or not at all?" he asked.

"Afterwards," she said. "For the moment I want to talk to you. I had no idea you knew Natalie so well."

"Natalie!" he murmured. "I presume you mean Madame Saumur."

She nodded.

"She has talked a lot to me about you these last few days. In fact, I very nearly suggested that you should bring one of those nice friends of yours to-night and make a *parti carré*."

"That would have been most entertaining, Comtessa," he said, with a twinkle in his eyes. "I don't think I have ever had the pleasure of having supper with—er—Natalie. By the way, you must forgive me if I sometimes call her by the wrong name. In the past it has changed with such bewildering rapidity that it will be a little difficult to remember."

"It is about that past that I want to talk to you, Captain Drummond."

"That should certainly prove interesting, dear lady," he said grimly.

She laid her hand on his arm.

"No one regrets it more bitterly than she does—believe me. She came under the influence of that man Carl Peterson when she was little more than a child." The Comtessa broke off suddenly. "May I ask what you're laughing at?" she demanded.

"Forgive me, Comtessa," said Drummond, still shaking silently, "but this is richer than anything I ever dreamed of. You can't tell me that at this stage of history you're trying to kid me with the seduced girlhood stunt? Why, my dear soul, there were times when little Irma—I beg her pardon—Natalie—left Carl Peterson at the post."

"Be that as it may, she's a changed woman now."

For a moment or two Drummond stared at her thoughtfully.

"What's the game, Comtessa?" he asked at length. "You are very far from being a fool. I also am conceited enough to regard myself as not quite an idiot. So once again I ask you—what's the game?"

"I find you somewhat *gauche*, Captain Drummond," she said, coldly. "There is no game as you call it. Natalie Saumur is a friend of mine, who admittedly in the past has been injudicious. She is sincerely sorry for that past and wished me to tell you so. And I, believing that an Englishman generally accepted an apology in the spirit in which it was offered, undertook to give you her message."

"You used the word injudicious, Comtessa," he said quietly. "Is that how you would describe a cold-blooded attempt to murder my wife?"

She laughed merrily.

"My dear man," she cried, "you don't really imagine she ever intended to do it, do you?"

"Shall we drop this fooling, Comtessa?" said Drummond, a little wearily. "If you are friends with her, you are friends with one of the most dangerous criminals in Europe. I know it, and all I'm wondering is whether you don't know it too."

"Are you aware what you're implying?" she cried, angrily.

"Perfectly," he answered. "Come now, Comtessa, shall we put the cards on the table? Don't forget that that poor devil Marton and I did not sit in silence during the time he was at Merridale Hall."

Not a muscle in her face moved. Her expression was one of bored indifference.

"Presumably not," she said. "What did you discuss: the weather?"

"Amongst other things," he answered. "And one of those other things was your charming self."

"Indeed. And why should he discuss me with a complete stranger?"

"You seemed to have a fascination for him which, now that I have met you, I can quite understand."

"You did not mention it at the inquest."

"There were several things I did not mention at the inquest," said Drummond, calmly. "Muddy footmarks on the carpet, for one."

"Really, Captain Drummond, you talk in riddles. What carpet?"

"The one in the smoking-room at Merridale Hall," he answered. "My dear Comtessa, there were more lies packed into that inquest than there are currants in a plum pudding."

"You mean you perjured yourself?" she cried.

"In excellent company," he remarked. "Though my crime was more in the nature of suppressing the truth, rather than of inventing lies. By the way, how is your dear father, Mr. Hardcastle?"

"Really, Captain Drummond, I find you perfectly intolerable," she exclaimed, furiously. "First of all you are extremely rude to me personally, and then you imply that my father was telling lies. You know yourself that the only thing which it was agreed should not be mentioned was the appearance of the ghost."

He smiled faintly.

"Yes. That was the only thing which was agreed," he remarked.

"Captain Drummond," she said, quietly, "I insist on your telling me what you are hinting at."

He looked at her steadily. What a superb actress she was. And for a moment he was tempted to tell her exactly what he was hinting at. Then he decided to temporize.

"My dear Comtessa," he murmured, "aren't we becoming unduly serious? It was all most unpleasant, but it is over and done with. And the only thing that is worrying me is that perhaps I ought to have mentioned what Marton told me."

"What's happened, kid?" asked Hardcastle.
"Just this," she replied. "Captain Drummond has got to go. He's wise to a great deal too much."

"What did he tell you?"

Was it his imagination, or was there a hint of anxiety in her voice?

He shook his head.

"I feel I must treat it as confidential even to you," he said, gravely. "Let's talk of something else. You remember Peter Darrell, don't you? He is going down to your father's studio to-morrow to see if he is suitable for that vacancy that is being advertised."

And the next instant, to his unbounded amazement, he realized that he had scored a bull's-eye. Not by the quiver of an eyelid did he give away the fact; but he had noticed the knuckles of her right hand, which was loosely holding the edge of the table, suddenly gleam white. And the complete unexpectedness of it, for the moment, bewildered him. He had made the remark quite casually for want of something better to say, and to extricate himself from a difficult position. And then to find that, by a sheer fluke, he had pierced her armour, was a most extraordinary thing, a thing moreover which required careful thought.

He drained his champagne and refilled both their glasses.

"He seems to fill the bill," he went on, casually, "as far as physical requirements are concerned. You might put in a word for him, Comtessa."

"I'm afraid I have nothing to do with the running of the studio," she said. "By the way, how did you know it was my father's?"

Her voice was quite normal. Save for that tell-tale tautening of her fingers she had given no sign at all that he had got home.

"I think he mentioned it to me," he lied glibly. "And I was thinking of going down with Peter," he continued. "If Mr. Hardcastle is there he might perhaps allow me to look on for a bit."

SHE made some perfunctory reply, and then suggested they should dance, to which he at once agreed. He wanted time to think. Why had his casual remark upset her?

There could be no secret about the studio, since it was advertising publicly. What, then, had caused her agitation? And after puzzling it out through three fox-trots he decided that it could be only one thing—the fact that he had, quite accidentally, let his remark about Peter Darrell and the studio immediately follow the conversation about young Marton. In his mind there had been no connexion whatever: in hers there had. And the thought at once opened up a new line of country.

Was it possible that the ordinary activities of the studio were a cloak for something criminal, and that Marton had found out about it? That that was why they had killed him, and that her agitation was due to the fear that Drummond had been told about it by Marton on the afternoon of Marton's death? The close juxtaposition of the two remarks might have made her think so—might have made her believe that he was playing a far deeper game than in reality he had been.

"I'm tired," she said, suddenly, "and this crowd is insufferable. What were we talking about?" she continued as they sat down again. "Of course—I remember: your friend and the studio. Has he ever done any film work before?"

"Never," said Drummond. "But the advertisement says that previous experience is not essential. What film are they making?"

"I think it is called 'High Finance,'" she answered. "I know that part of it is going to be done down in Devonshire. That was why my father was so anxious to get hold of Glensham House. But perhaps Mr. Marton told you that?"

"I don't think he actually mentioned that point," he said, gravely.

He was conscious that she was watching him covertly, and he realized that it was going to be a battle of wits.

"But he talked about the film?"

"Vaguely," said Drummond. "In a general sort of way, you know."

"He was very keen to act himself, poor boy," she went on. "In fact, there was some talk of his having a small part in this very film."

"Indeed," he said. "A little difficult to fit in, I should think, with his other work."

"It was merely a walking-on part," she explained. "And, of course, he might not have been suitable."

"Quite," said Drummond, politely.

"I'm surprised he didn't say that he might be acting, when he talked to you about the films," she said. "He was so very full of it, my father said, when he got to Glensham House."

"I think he was too nervy to talk about anything of that sort, Comtessa," remarked Drummond.

"I know—that money trouble. Captain Drummond, I rather blame myself over that. He used to take me out a good deal, and I suppose it must have cost more than he could afford. If only I had realized that sooner," she sighed, glancing at her wrist watch. "Will you think me very rude if I run away now? My father has a very important individual coming to lunch with him to-morrow, and I must appear at my best. I wonder if you know him by any chance—Sir Edward Greatorex?"

"Never heard of him in my life," he said. "Who is he?"

"A well-known business man," she answered. "But he spends most of his time abroad, so I'm not surprised that you don't know him."

He called the waiter and paid the bill. Then he accompanied her to the door.

"I am calling for my father," she said, "so don't trouble to see me home. Good night. I wish I could persuade you about Natalie."

AND ten minutes later she let herself into her maisonette in South Audley Street. The sound of voices was coming from a downstair room, which ceased as she threw open the door. Hardcastle, Slingsby, and Penton were sitting round the table, whilst curled up in an easy chair was Natalie Saumur.

"How did the party go?" cried Hardcastle.

"Did you tell that guy, Tom, where your studio was?" she said.

"I never even told him I had a studio," he answered. "What's happened, kid?"

"Just this. Captain Hugh Drummond has got to go."

"You mean he's wise to things?"

The three men sat motionless, staring at her.

"He's wise to a great deal too much. Especially about that young fool's death. And when I tried the Christian repentance stunt about Natalie it didn't cut enough ice to keep a mouse in cold storage."

"Damn all that," snarled Hardcastle. "What about the big thing?"

"I don't know, Tom. Frankly, I don't know." She lit a cigarette and sat down. "He started talking about the studio: one of his friends is rolling up to-morrow in answer to the advertisement—that fair-haired man, Darrell. Drummond is going down, too—wants to know if you'll let him look on. Now how did he know it was your studio? He said to me that you had told him."

"You mean Marton may have told him," said Penton, softly.

"Exactly. And if he told him that, he may have told him other things as well."

"Then surely he would have informed the police," said Slingsby.

And then, for the first time, the woman in the chair spoke. Her voice was deep and musical; her English held no trace of any foreign accent.

"That is where you are wrong," she said. "Hugh Drummond does not tell the police unless it is absolutely essential. In all the years I have known him he has never once called them in. He prefers to keep the thing to himself."

"Then what do you suggest?" demanded Hardcastle.

She lit a fresh cigarette from the stump of the old one.

"Let us see where we stand," she answered. "The mere fact that you have not mentioned the studio to him proves nothing. There is no secret about the matter. There are several quite ordinary ways in which he could have found out that you had rented it. At the same time, I quite admit that Marton *may* have told him, and, therefore, we had better act on that assumption."

She paused suddenly, and a spasm of anger shook her.

"You damned fools—the lot of you—for letting that young cub know the whole truth. If it hadn't been for that, this situation would never have arisen. However——" she controlled herself and continued, calmly, "there is no good crying over that. The situation has arisen and we've got to deal with it."

"Give me his address," said Penton, harshly, "and leave him to me. I've dealt with his sort before."

The woman in the chair looked at him with a pitying smile.

"My poor friend," she murmured, "do not be more ridiculous than God intended you to be. You have no more chance of dealing single-handed with Hugh Drummond than a board-school child would have. He would simply play with you, as he has in the past with men of four times your ability. You can't handle him that way."

Penton, his face white with rage, started angrily to his feet.

"Sit down," she said, curtly. "This is not the time for quarrelling: too much is at stake. After months of preparation we are on the verge of pulling off the biggest *coup* of our lives, and once again—Drummond intervenes."

For a moment or two the others stared at her, speechless; the expression on her face was almost that of a mad woman. And they realized that her mind was back in the past: she was thinking of those other encounters with this same large Englishman. Then, abruptly, the look faded: she was cool and collected once more.

"It is a pity," she went on, thoughtfully, "that I met your train at Paddington, *chérie*. There was no harm in your trying to pretend about me to-night, but I knew it would be useless. By the way, do you know where he is living now?"

"Queen Anne's Mansions, my dear one," came a genial voice from the door.

Drummond, his hat tilted on the back of his head, his hands in his pockets, was standing there, regarding them with a benevolent smile

(To be continued.)

PERPLEXITIES

1,076.—FOR YOUR EDIF—ICATION!

CAN you put the letters E D I and F in place of the asterisks shown below in such a way that the same word will appear twelves times? No other letters may be used, but the given letters may be repeated as often as you like. Where dots are shown no letters are to be placed.

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1,077.—COMPANY'S REGULATIONS.

MR. SLINGSBY and his family, five adult persons in all, were going first-class to Penny Bar and back. He was told at the booking office that the return fare was twice the single fare, but that return tickets would be issued to a party of eight at single fare rates. On asking for eight return tickets on these terms, he found that this concession was made only if there were eight *bonâ fide* passengers.

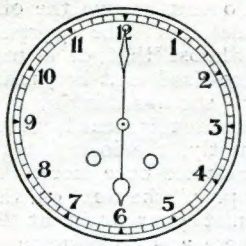
He managed to fulfil this condition by enlisting three more persons, who consented to accept a free trip to Penny Bar *plus* a fee of 1s. 3d. an hour apiece for the time actually spent in the train going there and back.

The distance to Penny Bar was 132 miles, and the ordinary first-class fare worked out at twopence-halfpenny a minute. If Mr. Slingsby saved £2 6s. 8d. by his manœuvre, what was the average speed of the train in miles per hour?

1,078.—WINDING TIME.

A CLOCK face has two symmetrically-placed, circular winding holes. The minute hand crosses each in three minutes, the first between 22 and 25 minutes past the hour, and the other between 35 and 38 minutes past the hour. The hour hand is also long enough to cross them. The pointers of both hands are the same width.

For how long in every complete period of twelve hours will both holes be free from obstruction by either hand of the clock?



Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

1,072.—THE PROBLEM OF THE THREE FARMERS.

THE number of ducks bought by John's wife was half the number of pigs bought by Albert, and twice the number of pigs bought by Jane's husband—therefore Albert was not Jane's husband. Hence Jane was married to George or John.

But John's wife bought ducks, whilst Jane bought no ducks. Hence Jane was George's wife.

Therefore Albert was married to Mary or Elizabeth.

The number of geese bought by Albert's wife was half the number of ducks bought by John's wife, and therefore one-quarter of the number of pigs bought by Albert. But the number of geese bought by Elizabeth was twice the number of pigs bought by Albert.

Hence Elizabeth was not Albert's wife.

Therefore Mary was Albert's wife, and John was married to Elizabeth.

The three couples were John and Elizabeth, Albert and Mary, George and Jane.

1,073.—EXPANDING WORDS.

THE following were the words: I, in, din, dint, tined, tinder, printed, sprinted, "dipterans," pedestrian.

1,074.—WATCH YOUR STOP.

THE punctuated sentences were as follows:—

If you go to the zoo, you will see elephants.

Playing the saxophone, you first take a deep breath, and swallow; the mouthpiece is then taken between the lips, and firmly, to boot.

Polish people are proud.

"To be or not to be" is what Hamlet said.

When bathing the baby, care must be taken.

To clean up his sparking plugs should be the regular practice of every motorist who wants easy running.

Does are female.

Wives may forgive; husbands never.

Tell drew his bow and shot the apple through.

The inside-left raced down the field and shot.

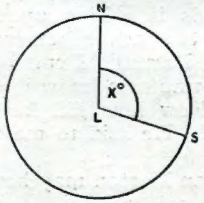
A gaol, civilization being what it is, is still necessary for locking up the undesirable.

Flies fly; pigs don't.

Brown is a dentist and can be seen any day.

Drawing stumps is a sign that the cricket match is over.

1,075.—REVOLVING LIGHTS.



N is the north, L the lighthouse, S the ship.

Since the red light came twice in succession, its northward coincidence with the blue took place between these appearances.

Calling the required angle $x°$, the time between the first (red) observation and red's northward direction was $\frac{360-x}{6}$ seconds, its angular speed being 6° per second.

The time taken by the blue, after this, to reach the direction L S $= \frac{x}{3}$ seconds, for it travelled 3° per second.

$\therefore \frac{360-x}{6} + \frac{x}{3} = 60 + 17 = 77$

$\therefore x = 462 - 360 = 102$

$\therefore$ The answer is 102° E. of N.

A. E. W. MASON J. B. PRIESTLEY
"SAPPER" MAY EDGINTON

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

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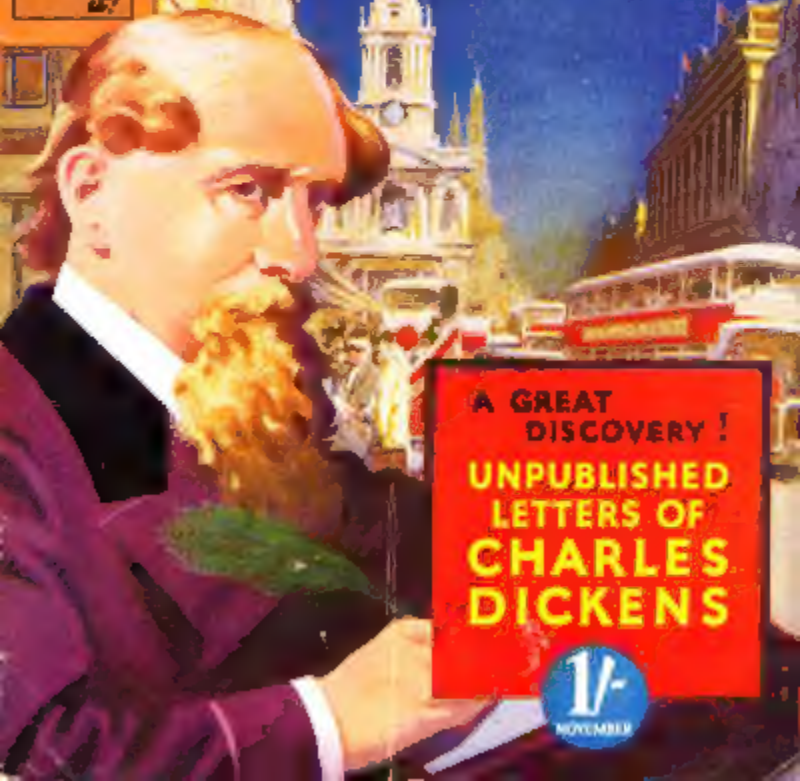

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